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*Illinois University College of Agriculture*

# ***Consolidation of Country Schools.***

***SECOND EDITION***

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Transportation has been declared impossible on account of "bad roads," but the horses now engaged in carrying young men and women from Illinois farms to city high schools in all sorts of conveyances are more than enough, if hitched double and attached to suitable vehicles, to carry all the children to a central school.

Good country schools cannot be established within walking distance of each other.

## RESOLUTIONS

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Whereas, The Illinois Farmers' Institute realizes that there is very great need for further improvement in the country schools, and

Whereas, The consolidation or centralization of country schools has been adopted to some extent in several other states, therefore be it

Resolved, That the Agricultural College of the University of Illinois be requested to collect and publish in this State, exact information relating to the methods, the difficulties, and the advantages of the consolidation of country schools, especially with reference to the progress and present status of such consolidation where it has been adopted.

Adopted by the Illinois Farmers' Institute in session at Bloomington, February, 1903.

The University.  
In Exchange.

APR 1 1910

**NO SCHOOL THAT HAS TRIED IT HAS  
EVER GONE BACK TO THE OLD WAY**

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## PREFACE TO FIRST EDITION.

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Agreeable to the request contained in the resolutions adopted by the Illinois Farmers' Institute at the Bloomington meeting in February, 1903, the College of Agriculture proceeded at once to gather reliable information.

Letters were sent to all the states of the Union asking what had been done, if anything, and how it had succeeded. Opinions were collected both from professional educators and from farmers who had experienced the workings of the system, all from sources the most diverse. Aside from this, a trusted agent of the institution visited the region in Ohio where the system had been longest in use, with instructions to note all the conditions found both favorable and unfavorable.

The investigation was begun and conducted without bias or previously formed impressions as to the merits or demerits, advantages or disadvantages of this method of administering the school system. As the investigation proceeded, however, the conviction that is inevitable to anyone who really studies this question gradually forced itself upon the consciousness and, in spite of efforts to the contrary, the reader will detect its presence in the mind of the writer at the time of putting the data in final form.

It is therefore the more necessary to assure the reader that this conviction arose during and by virtue of this investigation and that it did not exist in advance; indeed there was no opportunity for pre-existing opinions because the writer had never before given the slightest attention to the details of the subject.

E. DAVENPORT,

*Dean, College of Agriculture, University of Illinois.*  
Urbana, Illinois, January, 1904.

## PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION.

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The unexpected calls for the first edition of this circular soon exhausted the supply and a second edition has become imperative.

In the meantime conditions have changed. *Consolidation of Country Schools into larger units has passed the experimental stage*, and there is less need than formerly for extended accounts of "opinions." Accordingly much that was printed in the first edition is omitted from the second.

In the further study of this subject in its applications to Illinois two facts have quite unexpectedly come to the surface:

First that the farmers are in reality supporting a double school system, one at home by the process of taxation, the other in the nearest village in the form of "tuition," which tuition is generally more than enough to pay the salary of the superintendent of the entire city school system.

The other surprising fact is that in spite of all the arguments as to the impossibility of transporting pupils over "bad roads" the facts are that they are being transported now in large numbers, and have been for years all over the state, often traveling as far as seven miles and back daily during a high school course. True it is being done at private expense and often for several members of the same family. But it is done, and many vehicles follow each other daily at all seasons and in all kinds of weather, over all the roads of the state leading to high schools, and it is well within the facts to state that without a doubt *more horses are actually employed in Illinois today in transporting the older children to village high schools, and more miles are traveled than would be necessary to transport all the children to central schools if the horses were coupled together and hitched to proper vehicles.*

And so it is that the farmer not only supports his own school system, but because it is insufficient he also helps to support that of his city neighbors. Thus he supports a double system of schools, one at public expense and another at private



cost; and the *transportation that is inevitable under any system that will provide good schools for country children of high school age*, he manages in the most costly and inconvenient manner that could be devised.

The question of country high schools for country children is the largest issue before the farmers today. The conspicuous lack of these schools is the weakest spot in the agricultural development of the American people, and upon their solution of this matter largely depends the future of the agricultural masses.

What agriculture needs now more than any other thing is a system of schools that educates country people as successfully as city schools educate city people; a system that trains for life and fits for college without destroying the home or taking the child out of the influence of the favorable conditions under which he was born.

Good country schools cannot be established within walking distance of each other. Transportation is inherent in any effective system and it is inevitable. It will surely go forward. It is only a question of time and manner. The largest element of doubt and danger now is as to what sort of schools we shall have after consolidation.

Consolidated country schools do not mean annihilated country schools with the children hauled away to the nearest city to be schooled on the wholesale plan. The thing that should come out of this is a real country school for country children, and whether it is located in a small village, at a crossing of the roads, or in some picturesque piece of woodland, it must breathe the atmosphere of country life; it must instill a love for country things, and it must teach in terms of a life that the country child understands.

The chief concern now is that when consolidation comes, as it surely will, it may result in a system of real country schools doing both elementary and high school work for country children, serving them acceptably until they shall be old enough to go to college, when,—and not before,—they may well sleep under another than a father's roof and eat at another than a father's table.



## THE SITUATION IN GENERAL.

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In pioneer times, when population was scattered and before men had commenced to gather much in cities, most of the schools were country schools. These were generally taught by men. The teacher was sometimes ignorant it is true, but more often the "dominie" was the local preacher and very frequently indeed he was a college student bringing the then learning of the world to the common school, where by personal contact, individual influence and the enthusiasm of youth he became a veritable inspiration. In this way many a statesman, jurist, and journalist made his first impression on some country school, taught during vacation to eke out expenses.

Now all this is changed. With the development of the times and the diversification of industries the proportion of the people living in cities has vastly increased, as it must and should, and at these centers of population schools have been established the like of which had no existence in pioneer times. These schools have been graded and developed almost to the extent of becoming small colleges; indeed in the west the city high school, which prepares for college as well as for life, has almost completely prevented the coming in of the old fashioned academy.

Meantime the country school has not developed. Speaking relatively, if not absolutely, it has gone backward, because the old-time "good teacher" has gone to the city and the old-time "good scholar" has followed him, often taking the family and their interests along with them never to return, all operating to sap the vitality of the country school, not only as to attendance but as to personal interest and financial support as well. Thinking men have long since discovered that if this emigration to the cities for higher education is to continue, the country as well as its schools will be sapped of its vitality, and this thought has taken form in the expression that "the country child is entitled to as good educational privileges as the city

child, and this too without breaking up the family home," and that anything short of this is unfair to the child and unprofitable to the community.

Realizing the force and meaning of conditions such as these the attempt was made to discover to what extent they actually exist, what has been done for their amelioration and with what success if any.

#### SIZE AND COST OF COUNTRY SCHOOLS.

In a special bulletin published by the Superintendent of Public Instruction of Michigan, in April, 1902, it appears that of the 6,452 districts of the state, *fifty-one had two pupils or fewer and held no schools*; that eighty-three schools of the southern peninsula had five pupils or fewer; that the average attendance of these schools was three; that these eighty-three schools cost \$13,636.00 or an average of \$9.95 per pupil per month, or \$99.50 each per year of ten months, though the actual number taught averaged fewer than six. It also appears that 1,004 schools have fifteen or fewer; that the average attendance of these schools was but eight; that the thousand schools cost \$200,478.13 or an average of \$199.67 each, and that the cost per pupil was \$4.16 per month, or \$41.60 per year of ten months. The same report says that the average cost per pupil in the *city* schools of Michigan is never over \$19.40 per year of ten months, high schools included, the average cost being much less.

*From this it appears that over a thousand country schools in Michigan are maintained at a cost per pupil more than double that of the most expensive city schools.* In addition to this fact the Superintendent estimates that the country people of Michigan pay out annually *over a million dollars for tuition and other expenses* of their non-resident pupils from the country seeking higher learning in the city schools.

From the report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of Indiana for 1900, as quoted in a special bulletin on Rural Schools, published by the "Township Trustees of Tippecanoe County," it appears that Indiana has 108 schools with an attendance of five pupils or fewer, ten of which have but one pupil; that 487 have between five and ten, and 1,253 between

ten and fifteen, or in all 1,848 with an attendance of fifteen or fewer.

From the same source it appears that in 1879 the cost of city schools in Indiana was \$7.48 per pupil, and of country schools it was \$6.21 per pupil, but that in 1899, twenty years later, the cost of city schools had dropped to \$7.07, while the cost of country schools of all sizes had risen to an average of \$10.50, *showing that the cost of elementary education in the country is over forty-eight percent higher than the cost of education in the city including the high school course.*

The Missouri Superintendent's report for 1902 shows that more than one-fourth of all the schools of that state have fewer than twenty pupils and that 575 have fewer than twelve.

The Iowa Superintendent reports in 1901 that one-half the independent districts and three-fourths of the sub-districts of that state have an average daily attendance of less than twenty, and that 502 independent districts and 2,705 sub-districts have an attendance of less than ten.

From this it appears that, largely due to the emigration of the more advanced pupils to the city schools, the country schools are growing not only smaller and less efficient but relatively more costly. On this point the Trustees of Tippecanoe county, Indiana, say, "These conditions have come upon us so gradually that they may have escaped our notice, or if our attention has been called to them there has seemed no remedy. There is but one remedy and that is to collect the pupils together into larger groups by means of transportation."

#### TEACHERS AVAILABLE FOR COUNTRY SCHOOLS.

The inability of small, weak schools, such as have been described, to pay large wages is manifest; but it is also well to realize the available supply of teachers for the country schools in general as they are today. In other words, "what are their chances of getting a 'good teacher'?"

On this point the Iowa report of 1901 says, "of the 21,034 teachers licensed in 1900, 3,560 had no experience whatever in teaching, and 4,208 had taught less than one year." *Thus 7,768 or more than one-third were inexperienced,* not to mention the

large and unknown number of "experienced" but unsuccessful teachers.

Iowa further reports that of the 21,034 licensed teachers, 7,228 or over one-third hold third grade certificates, and of this number 6,167 or over six-sevenths were issued to females, "presumably young girls just out of school, many of them not having completed even the common school course." And the Superintendent adds, "This department has advised the county superintendents not to issue third grade certificates except where it is unavoidable in order to procure teachers to supply schools that otherwise would have to be closed for want of teachers. This policy has been universally followed by the county superintendents of Iowa. They report that they issue third grade certificates for the purpose of filling the schools." \* \* \* "Many of them (the candidates) have little or nothing (in the way of schooling) beyond the district school which they propose to teach."

The above is a fair sample of what runs through the reports from nearly all the states when this subject is touched upon, and they nearly all not only allude to it but treat it at length and with more evident concern than any other problem connected with the public schools. Moreover they all arrive at the same conclusion, namely, that the only remedy is fewer schools and larger ones, emphasizing the necessity of a less number of teachers at better wages, thereby securing not only better talent and training but also a better division of labor and better supervision.

\*Pay of country teachers contrasted with that of janitors of city school buildings:

SALARIES OF SCHOOL JANITORS, CITY OF ROCKFORD.

NAME.	AMOUNT.	NAME.	AMOUNT.
Lincoln.....	\$ 550.00	Henry Freeman.....	\$590.00
Hall.....	590.00	Brown.....	550.00
Kent.....	550.00	Montague.....	445.00
Garrison.....	445.00	Church.....	550.00
Kishwaukee.....	590.00	Wight.....	550.00
Nelson.....	320.00	Marsh.....	320.00
Blake.....	445.00	Haskell.....	320.00
Ellis.....	320.00	Turner.....	590.00
High School.....	1,170.00		

\*The highest salary now paid a country school teacher in Winnebago county is \$45 per month and only three or four teachers get that. The average wage is between

HIGHEST AND LOWEST SALARY IN WINNEBAGO COUNTY  
1895—1904 PER MONTH.

HIGHEST SALARY PAID ANY TEACHER. WINNEBAGO CO.			LOWEST SALARY PAID ANY TEACHER WINNEBAGO CO.		
YEAR	MALE	FEMALE	YEAR	MALE	FEMALE
1895.....	\$125	\$50	1895.....	\$25	\$20
1896.....	125	50	1896.....	20	18
1897.....	125	50	1897.....	23	18
1898.....	111	50	1898.....	22	20
1899.....	100	55	1899.....	25	20
1900.....	105	55	1900.....	25	20
1901.....	105	50	1901.....	25	20
1902.....	100	50	1902.....	25	20
1903.....	111	55	1903.....	25	20
1904.....	111	55	1904.....	25	20

This points a moral if it does not adorn the tale.

WHAT IS MEANT BY CONSOLIDATION.

By consolidation of schools is meant the uniting of two, three or more small and weak schools into one that shall be large enough in point of members to be interesting and strong enough in the way of money to afford a comfortable building, two or more good teachers, and reasonable facilities for work. It also means that outlying territory with but few children shall be combined with a near-by school that is strong, rather than be organized into an independent but weak district. In its fullest sense it means the uniting of all the schools of a township into one or two so located as to be most accessible, though not necessarily at the geographic center.

Consolidation either in full or in part means the transportation of a portion of the pupils, and this is one of the problems. It is generally accomplished in covered wagons, artificially warmed, holding fifteen to twenty children and driven by reliable men under contract and bonds as to regularity and good behavior. At first thought this would seem expensive, but experience has shown that this is not the difficulty for it is cheaper to transport a few children than to establish a school for them. This is because a wagon is cheaper than a school house, horses cheaper than fuel, and because drivers cost less than school teachers.

Consolidation also means, where small districts already ex-

\$30 and \$35 for a school year of eight months. If a country teacher should receive \$40 per month for a school year of eight months, that would make a yearly wage of \$320, the same yearly wage that the city of Rockford pays a janitor to take care of a four-room building.”

ist, some changes in buildings. These changes are sometimes effected by moving together two or more of the little old buildings, or by adding a portion to one, thus making a two or three-room house. In other instances new buildings are erected. All these ways are open. A makeshift seems often best at first until the plan is in full operation, when a permanent building seems certain to follow in good time. Where an expensive permanent building is erected at first and a graded school established the cost of this better school more than swallows up the saving from consolidation and the public mind is sometimes confused and even misled as to the real source of increased expense.

#### WHAT HAS BEEN DONE.

From the various sources of information consulted it appears that consolidation commenced in Massachusetts under the law of 1869, and was first operative in Quincy in 1874, since which time "more than 65 percent of the towns (townships) have found it necessary or advantageous to close and consolidate some schools."

In 1893 Superintendent Seymour Rockwell wrote, "For eighteen years we have had the best attendance from transported children; no more sickness among them, and no accidents. The children like the plan exceedingly. We have saved the town (townships) at least \$600.00 a year."

From this and from independent centers the plan has spread until it is in operation to a greater or less extent in twenty states, not of a single section of the Union, but of all sections, notably in Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Hampshire, Vermont, Ohio, Indiana, Iowa, and Kansas and to some extent in Maine, Rhode Island, New York, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Missouri, Georgia and Florida. The first consolidated school in Illinois opened at Seward, Winnebago county, February 1, 1904.

Massachusetts reports that in over 65 percent of the towns (townships) consolidation in whole or in part is in operation, and that in the year 1901-2 the sum of \$151,773.47 was expended for the transportation of children. Some of this goes for hired drivers, some for street car fare, some to parents for

delivering their children, and some to patrons who convey not only their own children but those of their neighbors as well.

Iowa reports that consolidation has been adopted in sixty-three districts of twenty-eight counties and transportation in eighty districts of thirty-five counties.

As showing what has been done in Iowa and as a sample of what is being done in many states a brief extract\* is added, giving particulars of the Consolidated School at Buffalo Center:

"The central school is located only one mile from the western boundary line of the district, thus making it extremely difficult on account of the distance to transport the children from these two remote portions of the township. The two rural schools maintained by the board are considered superior in many ways to the ordinary schools, since they are under the supervision of the principal of the central school, and are maintained for the same length of time each year as the central school.

"Contracts for the year 1900-1901 provide for the transportation of ninety-eight children. Six routes are laid out and one team is provided for each.

"The greatest distance the children most remote from the central school on the different routes are conveyed as follows: Route 1, three and one-fourth miles; Route 2, four and one-half miles; Route 3, five and one-half miles; Route 4, five and three-fourths miles; Route 5, five and one-half miles; Route 6, six and one-fourth miles. The average distance the children are conveyed on the longest route is about four miles.

"What can be said of the roads? Comparatively speaking, this is one of the newer counties, and roads have not been so thoroughly graded and drained as in old settled sections; consequently, the roads are not so good as in many parts of the state.

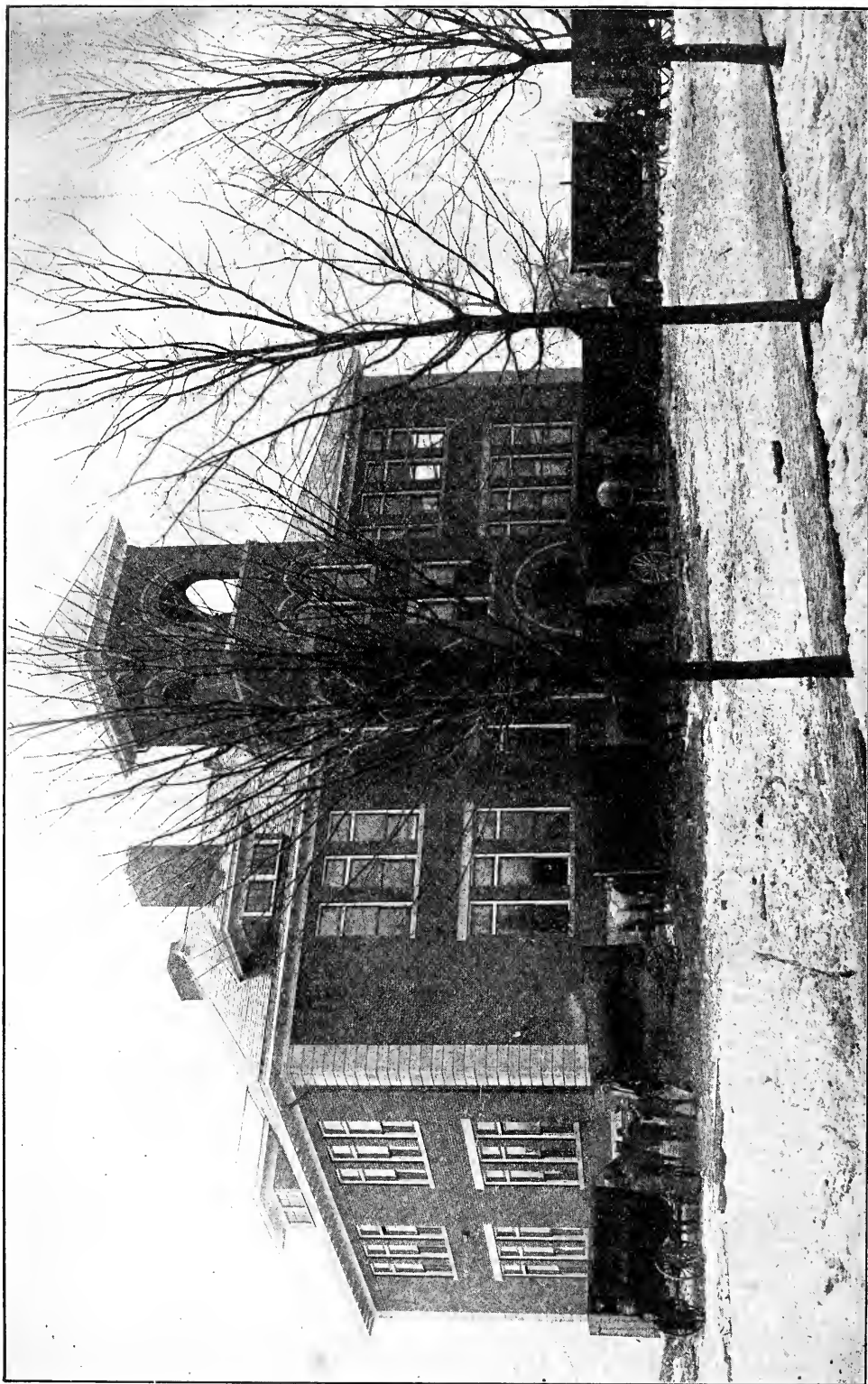
"What length of time is required to convey children to and from the central school? The time required depends upon the condition of the roads. When very muddy, as was the case when the writer visited the district in 1900, the drivers began collecting the children from 7:15 a. m. to 8:15 a. m., according to the length of the route, and returned them to their homes from 4:45 p. m., to 5:45 p. m.

"The compensation paid drivers is \$30 per month, except on Route 1, where only \$25 are paid. For this amount they are required to furnish their own properly covered, strong, safe, suitable vehicles, subject to the approval of the board, with comfortable seats, and a safe, strong, quiet team, with proper harness, with which to convey and collect safely and comfortably all of the pupils of school age on the route, and to furnish warm, comfortable blankets or robes sufficient for the best protection and comfort for each and all of the pupils to and from the public school building and their respective homes. They agree to collect all of the pupils on the route by driving to each and all of the homes where pupils reside each morning that school is in session in time to convey the pupils to school,

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\*From State Superintendent's Report, 1901.





Newton Graded School, showing wagons, Fountain County, Indiana. If the country people of Indiana can have such a building for their children, why not something like this for the country children of Illinois?

so as to arrive at the school building not earlier than 8:40 a. m. nor later than 8:45 a. m., and return the pupils to their homes, leaving the building at 4:00 p. m., or later, as the board may determine.

"They are required to personally drive and manage the team, and to refrain from the use of any profane or vulgar language within the hearing or presence of the pupils; nor may they use tobacco in any form during the time they are conveying the children to and from school. They are not permitted to drive faster than a trot nor race with any team, and are required to keep order and report improper conduct on the part of pupils, to the principal or president of the board.

"It is further provided between the driver and the board that one-half of the previous month's wages shall be retained to insure the faithful performance of the contract.

"In 1894 the district township was composed of six sub-districts, and required six buildings, six teachers, six sets of apparatus—in fact all of the equipment necessary for one district was required by each of the others.

"The secretary's report of that township for the year ending September, 1894, (before consolidation) shows that during the year the schools were in session *six* months and the average daily attendance for the entire district township was *ninety*.

"For the year ending September, 1900, (after consolidation) eight teachers were employed for *nine* months, and the average daily attendance was 290. Estimating the average cost of tuition per month per pupil upon the total expenditures for school purposes, we find it to have been \$5.03 in 1894, under the plan of separate schools, while in 1900 (under consolidation) it was \$2.31."

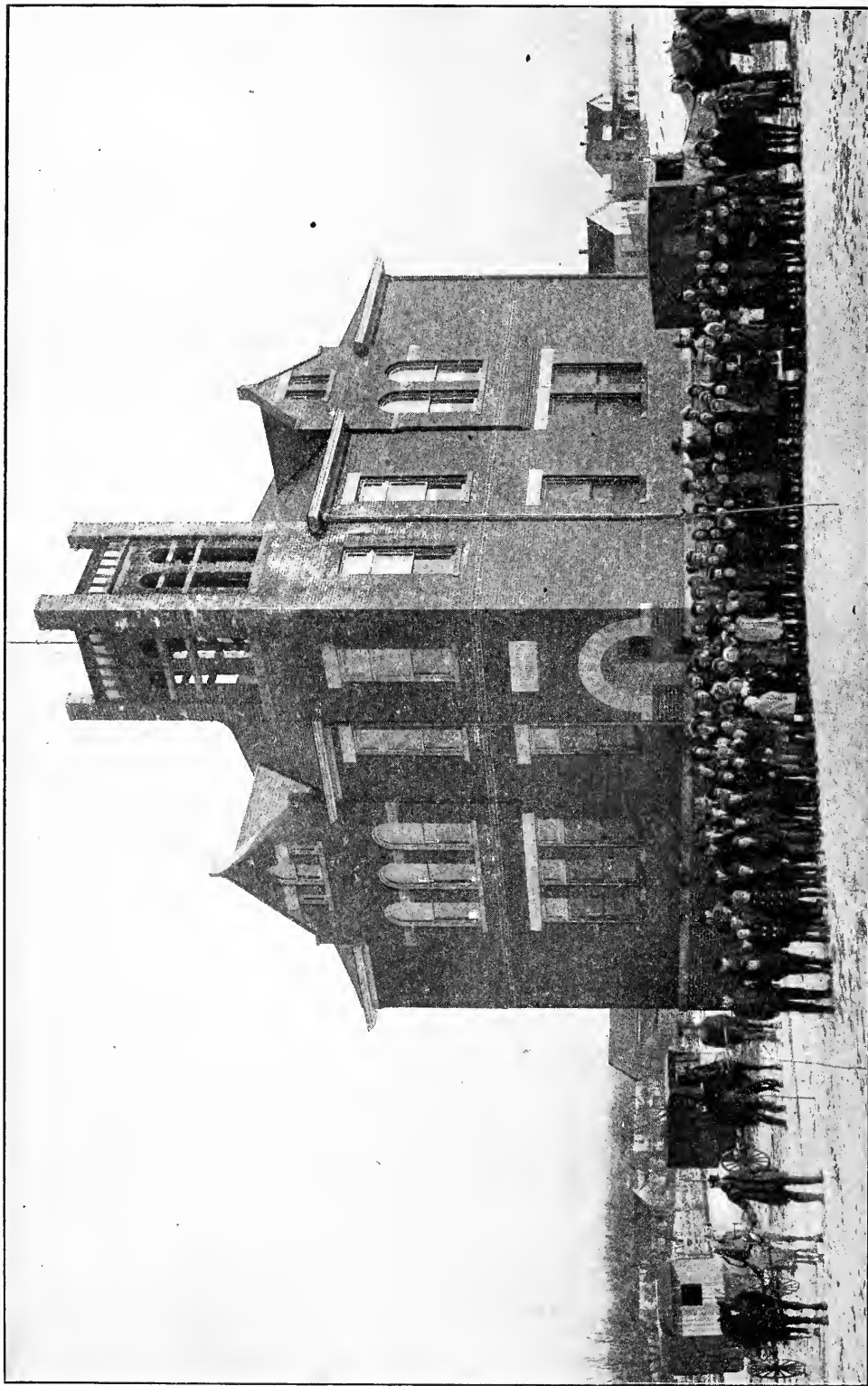
Indiana reports 181 wagons transporting 2,599 children in fifty-one counties of the state, the largest number being in La-Grange County, where twenty wagons carry 300 children each day, and in Whitely County, where seventy-three wagons carry 1,114 children.

What has been done in Tippecanoe County is given here as examples of partial consolidation and as showing what can be gained by the first steps:\*

"Last year the pupils of district No. 13, Perry township, were conveyed to district No. 2, at a cost of one dollar per day, saving about \$200 to the township. This attempt was successful during the year in nearly every feature. The union of the two schools gave an enrollment of twenty-seven pupils, about the minimum number for a good working school.

"School No. 10, Washington Township, has been very small for some time, last year enrolling but eight pupils. The trustee, J. C. Eckhart, abandoned the school, the contract for transportation being let to the lowest bidder, under bond. The pupils of that district are transported to district No. 2—the Buck Creek High School—at a cost of \$1.25 per day, saving about \$150 for the township. The distance is about four miles and patrons are well pleased with the service.

\*From Report Superintendent of Public Instruction for Indiana for 1900.



Sterling Graded School, Fountain County, Indiana. The country child is entitled to just as good educational advantages as those enjoyed by the most favored city child attending the public school. The country people of Winnebago County, Illinois, paid \$30,615.84 tuition during the past ten years to give a PART of the country children high school advantages.

"School No. 3, in Shelby Township, was abandoned about the first of December. The enrollment was but six. This will save about \$150. The pupils are easily accommodated in other schools."

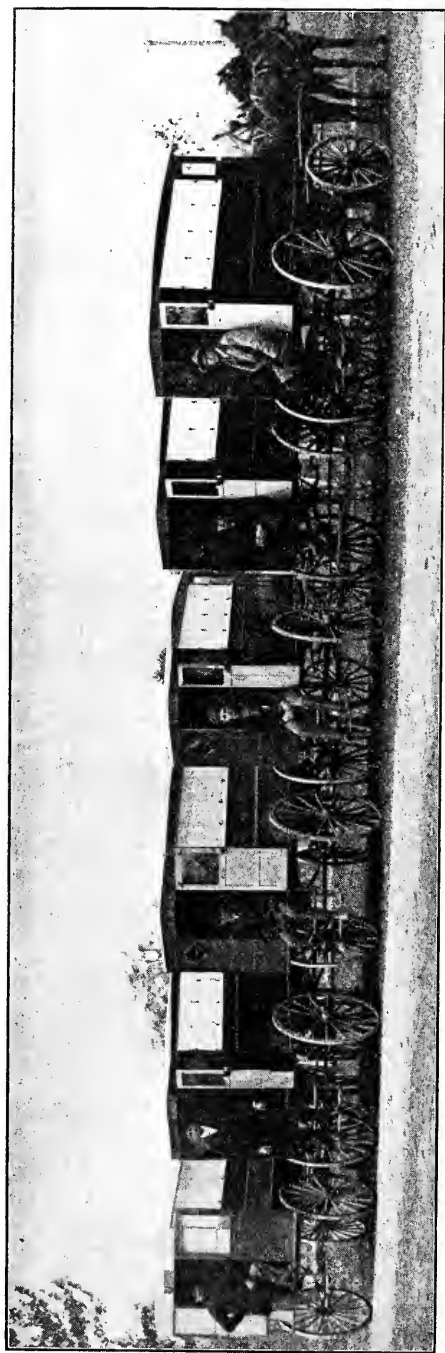
"School No. 5, Fairfield Township, which last year enrolled five pupils, two from this township, burned down during the term and was not rebuilt, since there were not pupils enough to sustain it. Last term this school was maintained at the rate of \$120 per capita cost. The abandonment of this school saves about \$450 to the township.

"In the township where the seven village teachers enrolled 218 pupils and the six rural teachers eighty-four pupils, none of the rural schools are to exceed three miles from a village, these villages could easily accommodate every pupil in the township. Eight teachers could do the work formerly done by thirteen and no pupil would be transported over four miles. In the township where the six schools enrolled 148 pupils and the five, sixty-eight pupils, the five small schools are located not over three miles from one of the best two-roomed buildings in the county. Two teachers here could easily do the work formerly done by five and a sixth school near the building might be added. Four of the houses so abandoned in this township are old buildings, which will soon have to be replaced with new ones at a cost of several thousand dollars. Yet the work can be better done at the central building and the same money that gave the township between six and seven months' school would give it eight or nine months. In the township where the four schools, located not over three miles from a village, enrolled forty-five pupils, the village could accommodate three of them without an additional teacher."

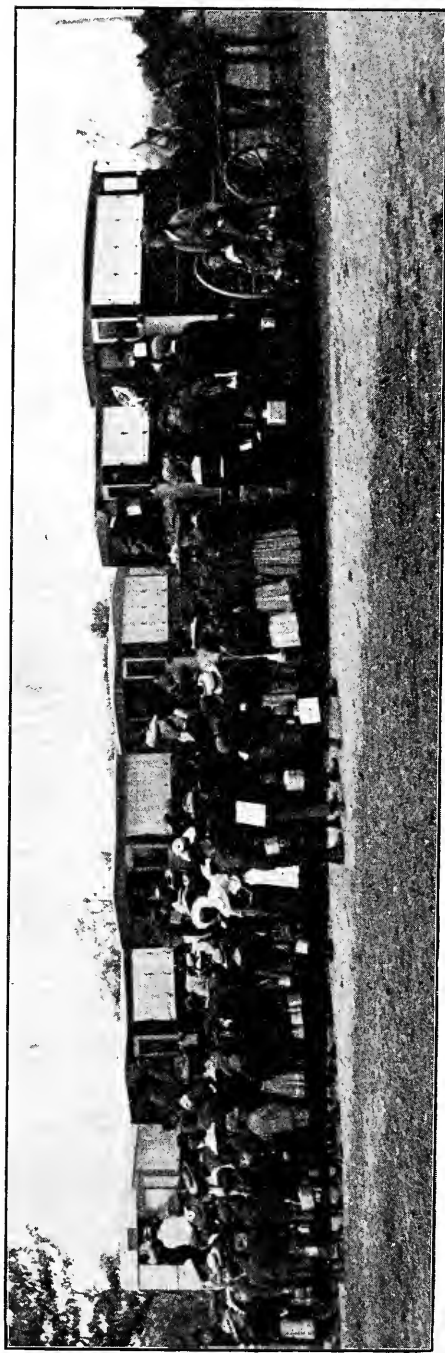
The following tabular statements are from the report of H. S. Gilhams, Superintendent of Schools for LaGrange County, Indiana, and quoted from Kern's Year Book, p. 45-46. These data are three years later than the facts just quoted.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT SHOWING SAVING FROM CONSOLIDATION IN LAGRANGE COUNTY, INDIANA,  
SCHOOL YEAR 1903-1904.

Townships	Schools abandon'd	Addition'l teachers at points of consolidation	Saving in No. of teachers	In salaries	In fuel and repairs	Gross reduction
Bloomfield...	4	0	4	\$1374.40	\$300	\$1674.40
Clay.....	4	0	4	1374.40	320	1694.40
Greenfield...	5	1	4	1374.40	300	1674.40
Johnson.....	5	1	4	1374.40	260	1634.40
Lima.....	3	0	3	1030.80	240	1270.80
Milford.....	7	2	5	1718.00	280	1998.00
Springfield..	5	2	3	1030.80	240	1270.80
VanBuren...	5	1	4	1374.40	320	1694.40
Totals.....	38	7	31	\$10651.60	\$2260	\$12911.60



Hacks Waiting for Children, Milford Township, LaGrange County, Indiana.



Children entering hacks, Milford Township, LaGrange County, Indiana.

From the above deduct the following additional expense incurred in transportation of 428 pupils in 29 hacks to 14 different schools. The difference, \$6,734.74, is the net saving by consolidation.

Townships	Number of hacks	No. of Pupils conveyed	Cost of all transportation for year	Net gains
Bloomfield.....	4	73	\$1017.00	\$ 657.40
Clay.....	4	46	712.08	982.32
Greenfield ...	3	35	646.00	1028.40
Johnson.....	3	51	517.50	1116.90
Lima.....	2	30	583.00	687.80
Milford.....	6	117	1261.48	736.52
Springfield.....	4	43	873.00	397.80
Van Buren .....	3	33	566.80	1127.60
Totals .....	29	428	\$6176.86	\$6734.74

From this it appears that the transportation of 428 children made possible the closing of 38 schools, a reduction of 24 teachers and a net saving of \$6,734.74.

Important facts as to the service, also from Superintendent Gilham's report, and Superintendent Kern's Year Book:

1. The drivers carry watches and consult them while on the route.
2. Each driver keeps the time of the consolidated school, generally standard.
3. The rate of speed while on the route averages five miles per hour for the year.
4. The time of arrival varies from ten to fifteen minutes prior to the opening of the schools.
5. The more remote pupils ride about five miles and 60 percent ride three miles or less.
6. Children are kept comfortable by stoves, patent heaters, blankets and soap stones.
7. The greatest advantage to the service is township ownership of hacks and the improvement of roads.
8. The drivers exercise due responsibility in promptly and safely conveying the children to school and returning them to their homes; they also, by contract, prohibit questionable language, undue familiarity and boisterous conduct in or about the hacks.
9. Eighty-five (85) percent of the patrons have reported the consolidated school as their preference in comparison with the "old way."
10. Decreased enumerations in eight of our eleven townships gave the system its initiative and the better instruction and educational encouragement to the great majority of the conveyed pupils has strengthened the services of the schools and enhanced the local educational spirit.

Ohio reports consolidation in operation in forty-five townships in twenty counties of the state and the Superintendent

adds, "I am satisfied there are many more though not reported. In my judgment centralization is a substantial solution of the vexed country school problem." Partly to show what has been done in Ohio, and partly for information on the general subject the following clipping is given in full:

\*CENTRALIZATION OF RURAL SCHOOLS, BY C. G. WILLIAMS, MEMBER OF THE  
BOARD OF EDUCATION, GUSTAVUS, TRUMBULL COUNTY, OHIO.

"Gustavus is a typical rural township of the Western Reserve covering twenty-five square miles, with a little hamlet composed of eighteen dwelling houses, two churches, town hall, school building, one store, and finally a blacksmith shop at the center, and some eight hundred population scattered promiscuously over the township with a school enumeration of about two hundred and forty.

#### DECREASE IN POPULATION.

"In common with many rural communities there has been a falling off in population in recent years. In fact there are fewer people living in our township today than there were sixty years ago. No manufacturing, and nothing save agricultural and live stock interests. Less population and fewer children in our schools. The time came when it seemed impolitic to maintain our usual number of sub-district schools. Up to August '98, we had maintained nine sub-district schools as conveniently located as possible, with a free high school at the center of the township, which any pupil was at liberty to attend when he could pass the required examination. Some few of these sub-district schools were attended by twenty to twenty-five pupils; others had an attendance of five to ten, and one school was kept up for several months for only two pupils. Since the above date we have been accommodating our school population in a five-room building located near the center of our township, to and from which every pupil living more than one-half mile from the center is conveyed at public expense.†

#### NINE COVERED WAGONS.

"Built expressly for this purpose with a view to comfort and health of occupants and owned by the route contractors, call at the home of every pupil in the morning, and return every pupil to his home after school. Our routes vary in length from two and one-half to five miles, and cost us from 68c to \$1.55 per day. These routes are let to the lowest responsible and satisfactory bidder. In the letting of routes the moral character of the contractor is taken into consideration and he is put under strict bond, not only to do the work, but is held responsible under the Superintendent of Schools for both the comfort and the moral condition and order in his wagon in transit.

\*From September number, 1902, of *The Ohio Teacher*. Quoted from Kern's "The Country School and the Country Child."

†For cut showing route of travel, see Superintendent Rankin's report, p. 28.



## CHEAP TRANSPORTATION.

"To many people the price at which we are able to let our routes is a matter of surprise. It should be remembered that during the greater part of the year both trips can be made in four hours or less, and that during the balance of the year when more time is required, our contractors (usually farmers with few acres who have to keep a team of horses anyhow) are not very busy upon their farms. We have never yet had any trouble in letting our routes, and of late we have had enough routes to supply all who would like them.

## PROVIDING FOR EMERGENCIES.

"Before this system was put into operation some prospective patrons worried a little as to what might happen should a child be taken ill at school, in some instances a long way from home. Our Board of Education has thought best to provide against that trouble by contracting with a man to take any pupil immediately to his home that the Superintendent thinks should for any reason go home. We have not as yet had to expend over \$3 any year for this purpose. It surely is a comfort to a parent to know his child will be brought home if occasion demands it.

"Speaking of opposition it should be recorded that when the proposition came before our voters for indorsement four years ago at our annual spring election, it was defeated upon a tie vote. Three weeks thereafter the same, or a very similar proposition was submitted to our voters and, with practically every vote in our township cast, centralization carried by a majority of only seventeen votes. It will be seen that public sentiment was pretty evenly divided and that the new system and the new school would have very many critics.

## THE REAL TEST.

"It is a fair question to ask, how have these opponents been pleased? Perhaps as good evidence as I can bring to the readers of *The Ohio Teacher*, is the result of an investigation and canvass of our township made by a visiting committee from another county of the state in their efforts to determine how the new system was working. This visiting committee was composed of two members, one of whom was sent here as an opponent, the other as a friend of centralization. Their canvass was made after our school had been in operation two years. This committee spent several days in our community visiting not only the school but many of the parents of the pupils at their homes, and particularly those people who resided farthest from the school. Their report to their own Board of Education (afterward published) shows seven out of fifty-four people interviewed to be yet opposed to centralization. But of the seven opposed to the system six were without children in attendance upon school. This was two years ago. I think public sentiment is even more in favor of the "new way" now than then.

## CENTRALIZATION IS HERE TO STAY.

"As further evidence that centralization is here to stay attention should be called to the fact that while Gustavus was the first township in this county to adopt this system, since we have adopted it every township ad-

joining us have adopted it, and at the present time has in operation similar schools. Those who are nearest us seem to be most favorably impressed with its benefits.

"As to the comparative expense of our public schools conducted in the old and new way: The last year in which we worked under the old system our expenses were as follows: Teachers, \$2,400; other expenses, \$555; total, \$2955.

"Under the new system for the year ending August, 1901: Teachers, \$1,320; hauling pupils, \$1,755; other expenses \$200; total, \$3,275.

"Deduct from this \$75 received from foreign tuition (not received under old system) and we have an extra expense of \$245 for the well supervised and graded central school as compared with the "hit-or-miss" sub-district way. For the year ending August, 1902, we employed an extra teacher at an expense of \$240 more. With a larger daily attendance under centralization the per capita expense is about the same. Our taxable property is in the neighborhood of \$370,000, and our tax rate for school purposes, 9 or 10 mills on the dollar.

#### ADVANTAGES OF GRADED SCHOOLS.

"I need hardly take any of your space in considering the advantages of a good graded school as compared with the average sub-district school. Under a competent superintendent, with large numbers and consequently greater interest and enthusiasm, with better teachers, more satisfactory apparatus, more regular attendance, and absolutely no tardiness, it goes without saying that we have a school beyond all comparison with our former sub-district school. It costs a little more money in our case but we are getting more than value received for it, and when this is true the tax payer who has the interest of the public at heart is satisfied.

#### OUR COURSE OF STUDY

"is likely very similar to the ordinary village special district school, with the possible exception that we have more work along the line of nature study than is usually given. This is true of all grades.

"Among the advantages not already mentioned I should not fail to include the fact that we are able to keep the older boys in school longer. Under the old system most of them dropped out before reaching the high school. There is no gap now to bridge over—no changing from an isolated sub-district school to a high school elsewhere."

In the Province of Victoria, Australia, "158 schools were closed by the plan of consolidation and after deducting the cost of conveyance the saving amounted to \$50,000 per annum. The Minister says that it is a marked success and that if one feature as to its working stands out more prominently than another it is the remarkable regularity in attendance of the children conveyed."

A later report from Victoria is quoted in the Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction for Iowa, for 1901, as follows:

"Under the system of conveyance 241 schools have been closed. The saving in closed schools amounts to about £14,170 (over \$70,000.00) per annum. The attendance is so regular and the system so popular that applications are constantly made for its extension."

#### SUPERINTENDENT RANKIN'S REPORT.

In order to secure information at first hand Mr. Fred H. Rankin, Superintendent of College Extension, was sent to those counties in the Western Reserve where consolidation has been longest tried and is in most complete operation. He visited schools and homes, rode in the wagons, talked with patrons, pupils, and drivers, and by every means at his disposal undertook to learn the exact condition of things. His report is printed in full:

*Professor Eugene Davenport, Dean, College of Agriculture, Urbana, Ill.*

DEAR SIR:—The writer herewith makes brief report of a visit made in May, 1902, to Indiana and Ohio for the purpose of personally investigating the working of the centralized school system.

Acting under direction of the College of Agriculture and having no bias or preconceived personal opinion it was the endeavor to look for exact conditions, and by just comparisons in townships where the system of centralized schools might be found in operation both alone, and in connection with other schools determine what had been gained or lost by consolidation.

A stop was made at Indianapolis, Indiana, where State Superintendent Jones informed me that centralization of the district schools is going on in many parts of the state and that it was proving satisfactory in the main. He said, that while there had been some occasional surface disturbance there was on the other hand a steady, constant undercurrent carrying the sentiment of centralization into new communities. Transportation is a success. The township system prevails in this state and the township trustee has the power to close the school and transport children at public expense.

Some forty counties in Indiana have begun the work of collecting pupils into larger groups by transporting them. In talking with a number of pupils of the schools and those who have observed the system throughout the state, the testimony is nearly unanimous that attendance is improved by the conveyance of pupils, and in the minds of the majority the many advantages outweigh some of the disadvantages which may be named. Over sixty percent of the towns and districts report the cost as less but the results as better after consolidation. About fifteen percent report the cost as being the same and ten percent that the system costs more, but the results are better. In the newer districts where the system was adopted about three-fourths of the patrons seem to approve of the plan and earnestly advocate it. Some are in a measure indifferent and a few are opposed

to it, although in those communities where it has been practiced the longest the opposition is the least. Professor W. C. Latta of the College of Agriculture at Lafayette, who is also State Superintendent of Farmers' Institutes, says, that while some disadvantages and objections are noted yet in general the success of the new plan, when tried, seems remarkable and decisive. Mr. John S. Boord, a prominent farmer of Fountain County, says, "Two years ago in Van Buren Township the trustees began the experiment. At first only three hacks were used at the Stone Bluff school. Last year several of the school houses were sold and more hacks added and this year it is the plan to close all the schools excepting at two buildings and transport the pupils there." These buildings cost about \$8,000 and are fully up-to-date in every needed particular. The patrons like it after trying the plan and there is hardly a person who expresses opposition even though opposed to it before trying the experiment.

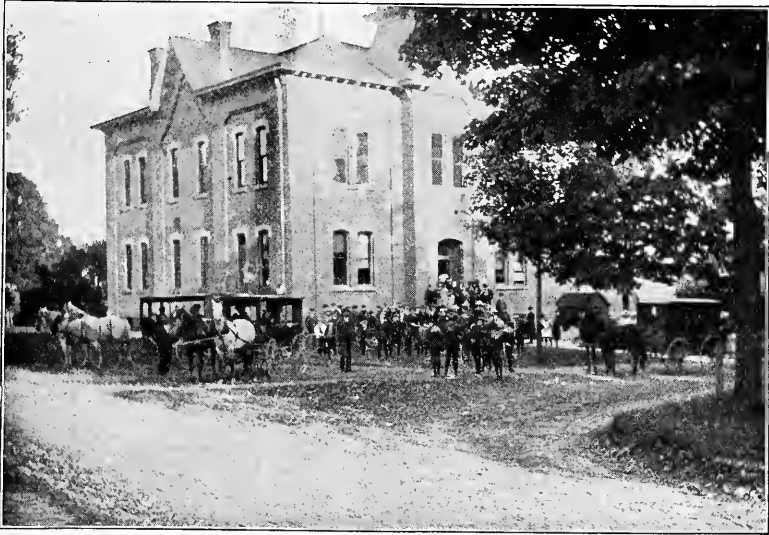
The tour of inspection next led to northern Ohio. Trumbull, Ash-tabula, Geauga, Lake and Portage counties comprise some of the finest portions of the Western Reserve and here is where consolidation of schools is in more complete operation than in any other section of the west.

The question of centralization seems to be largely a campaign of education. Massachusetts adopted the idea and centralized schools have been in operation there for nearly forty years, and in Ohio I am told that the question was agitated some twenty years before it was adopted in a single case.

From an interview with Honorable O. E. Bradfute, Cedarville, Ohio, former president of the State Farmers' Institutes, a close observing, scholarly gentleman who has spent his life upon the farm and is now living upon one of the best stock farms in the state, I quote: "It was not an easy thing to bring about this idea of centralization of schools. There are many people in Ohio today who are afraid to tackle this question but I can say with confidence that we now have a nucleus, especially up in the Western Reserve, from which we can work, and the idea is fast spreading all over the state. We have established enough so that we know they (the schools) are bound to be a success. They have been established long enough for us to know something about it. We know they are a success from a financial standpoint and from the standpoint and opinion of the people who live in the communities where they have been in active operation the longest. I can truthfully say that in Ohio we are beginning to regard the centralization as something like the measles—catching. I have said to our people that there are four things that are going to benefit this country and I think these four things are just as applicable to Illinois as they are to Ohio conditions. These are the telephone, the daily mail, the electric car and the centralized school in the country, and when you have gotten these you have all the advantages of the city in the country and all the advantages of the country besides. No, I do not think that I can advocate too strongly the plan of the centralized schools."

Centralization of schools does not necessarily mean that all the schools of a township must be combined into one school house located at the geographical center of the township. Three or four districts may unite making a two-room school and there may be two or more of such schools in a township, or small schools may be centralized with an established graded school where the conditions are favorable. A complete centralization means the uniting of all the schools of a township into one central graded

school, or there may be the consolidation of schools of two or more townships just as now we have union district schools. In Ohio the township is the unit for school purposes and the schools are managed by a township board of nine to fourteen members, made up of one director from each of the sub-districts of the township. They have no county superintendent of schools but instead there is a township superintendent who is elected by the township board of trustees.



Kingsville Centralized School, October, 1900. Children going home from School.  
Centralization of Schools in Ohio began here in 1892.

Centralization in Ohio originated in Kingsville, Ashtabula county, in 1892, since which time a large number of townships throughout the Western Reserve have consolidated their schools and are transporting their pupils. In this part of Ohio we find the bulk of the centralized schools, not only those which have been longest in operation but also those which are in all stages of work, from the earliest organization to complete centralization. In some townships such as in Madison, Lake County, there are two or more centralized schools, while in others they are centralized about the villages. In a number of instances the writer visited different townships which were all embraced in one district and the children were brought to one centralized school. The Kingsville school bears all the marks of a thoroughly organized and efficient high school. There is a good library which has been increased by a number of volumes bought by the literary societies of the school. Twelve grades are taught and at the time of the visit there were seventy-four pupils in the high school. The superintendent is a graduate of Oberlin College and receives a salary of \$1,200. A significant indication as to how this movement is regarded was the fact that a vote was taken during the present year by which two sub-districts which had not been included in the centralized school ex-

pressed their desire to take advantage of the better opportunities and come in as a part of the centralized district. The vote on the question of centralization stood six to one in favor of the movement and the writer was assured by several who were conversant with the facts that almost invariably those who were antagonistic to the movement were patrons who did not have children in the school. The two sub-districts cited above lay in remote corners of the township and were the last to vote whether they would abandon their schools and join the centralized school at Kingsville. The following written statement from Mr. Wm. M. Tyrrell, of Kingsville, Ohio, who was a member of the board of education, will give a clear understanding as to how he canvassed his district and the results obtained. He says:

"Desiring to know the wishes of the parents of my district, I only visited those who had children attending school, and found that with one exception all wanted their children taken to the Kingsville high school.

"The one exception had a boy five years old and thought him too young to ride so far.

"The opposition comes from those who have no children to educate, or those who care not as to their children's education.

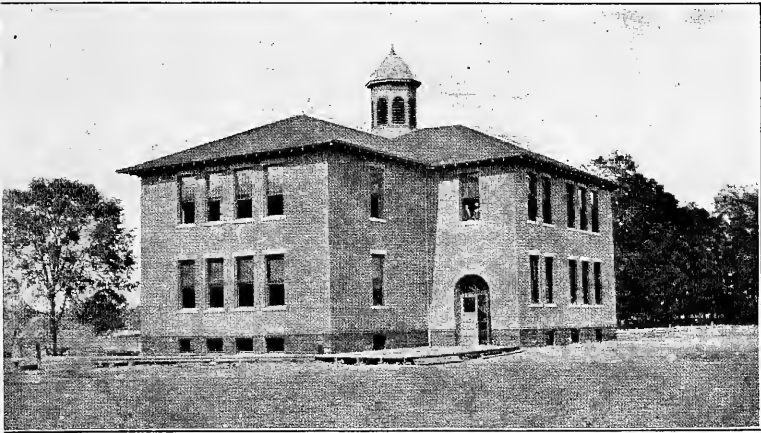
"The objections raised are of no value when compared with the advantages derived from the centralization plan.

"Having to start so early in the morning is one of the objections raised. But where it has been in operation for two years or more, nothing more is said about it. Another is, greater danger of contracting contagious diseases. So far we have not suffered from that cause. Those who are backward about accepting advanced ideas have many objections that are not worthy of notice.

"The advantages of centralization are many; among them has been found that the attendance has been more regular, very seldom are scholars absent; much more interest is being taken and greater progress made. They have better literary advantages, better teachers, more competition in their work and in the end are far more accomplished than would have been possible had they attended the district school. I might add farther that it has been proven that the children have been more warm and comfortable."

Madison Township in Lake County gives an excellent presentation of what might be called partial centralization or the grouping together of three or four schools into one without attempting to bring all the schools of a township to the geographical center. It would be impracticable to do this owing to the shape of Madison Township, extending as it does along the shore of Lake Erie; it is nine miles long and five miles wide. At North Madison a building which had originally been used as a store had been purchased and fitted over for school purposes, and four district schools were centralized at this point. Three teachers were in charge and gave instruction to 112 pupils, including all the grades from the first to the eleventh. Pupils were brought to this school by vans from a distance of four miles. The school was well organized. In the same township the board decided to centralize two schools. The school houses were moved to a common point between the two and here the eight grades were divided into two groups which were given to the teachers who had

been teaching in the separate sub-districts. In Madison Township significant testimony was developed as to the effect of centralization in bringing out and securing the attendance of more pupils; for example, I was told of one of the abandoned schools which originally had but four pupils in attendance yet when wagons went over that route to transport the four children of this district to the centralized school, instead of four, eight pupils presented themselves and were in constant attendance. Again in the same township there was a case where the abandoned school had an attendance of only ten pupils, yet on the first morning when the conveyance made the round in that district eighteen children presented themselves to be transported to the centralized school. The superintendent of this school, Mr. John R. Adams, says, "The movement was at the beginning thoroughly opposed, but now there is no objection evidenced and a proposition to go back to the old ways would not be entertained at all. In place of a six and seven months' school year, all of the schools of the township now have nine months' school."



Centralized Country School Building, Green Township, Trumbull County Ohio, erected 1900. To this school are brought all the children of the township and nine wagons are employed in the transportation.

A still more striking example of what consolidation has accomplished in northwestern Ohio is found in the schools of Green township, Trumbull County. It will amply repay an interested enquirer to visit and investigate this place not only as to the general methods in rural school work but as an example of what may be done. It would almost make a convert of the most doubtful to the plan. The school building is a handsome brick structure, slate roofed, steam heated, with the most improved seats in all the rooms, musical instruments, library, etc. It is located in the exact geographical center of the township, which is a distinctly rural community, with only the school building and a church. It is eleven miles from one railroad and six miles from another. The building was constructed in 1900 at a cost of about \$6,000. The first vote for organization stood 135 for and 50 against consolidation, but about two months



later when the second vote was taken to bond the township for \$2,000 additional, the vote at this time stood 75 for and 9 against, and three of those who voted against consolidation the last time told me they were forced to admit that the school was a success and they were now glad that it carried. To this building are brought all the children of the entire township, numbering about 180, who are transported by eight wagons, the cost aggregating for the township but a trifle higher than under the old system.

Here the writer saw pupils of all ages and sizes, from the little ones in the primary grade to the large boys and girls belonging to the upper classes, and it was the most interesting sight of the entire trip to see the wagons come in with the children promptly at 8:45 in the morning and leave with them in the afternoon. Everything moved with military precision. There was no friction anywhere. The writer took a drive in one of these vans making the entire trip. The drivers had no complaint to make, were satisfied with what they were getting and in most cases were the parents of some of the school children. We made a special point to talk with many parents throughout the township and did not find any adverse criticism in this section. We were fortunate in being at this place the evening of the annual exhibition of the junior class, and the same vans which took the pupils home from school brought them all back again at 7:30 in the evening to attend this entertainment. The program was a most creditable one and a number of the speakers referred with pride to the benefits which they were deriving from their centralized school. One could not help observing the interest and enthusiasm pervading this genuine rural school conducted on the common-sense basis, resulting in a most wholesome uplift to a country community. It was certainly a spectacle worth going a long way to see, and as we visited the school next morning the regular school work certainly reflected great credit upon the teachers, who seemed to have developed new ideas in teaching, evidently as a part of the new system. Not only this but we could see that the social and home life of the vicinity had been touched by the new order of things.

The value of personal enthusiasm and a pride in school work was never more fully illustrated than in the school at Green township, for it must be remembered that this is wholly a rural township and this strictly a rural school with the children scattered over twenty-five square miles of territory. As one watched the wagons back up to the school house steps and thought of what it all meant one could not help being convinced that here was an advance step in the solution of the country school problem, because this work was being done in the country and six miles from the nearest railroad. Four minutes from the time the bell was rung for dismissal the 180-odd children were all loaded into the vans and driven away. Order and precision of movement similar to that of a military training school was observable; no confusion, no noise or scurrying for precedence, but perfect order was maintained and every courtesy shown as the children took their seats in the van. If a child takes sick at the school he is sent home at public expense. This has occurred, I was told, four times in the past three years. As one of the parents said, "It is a great comfort to know that if occasion demanded it my children will be brought home." As to the character of the work done in this well graded six-room high school as compared with that of the nine scattering schools, there is no room for argument, there is absolutely no comparison possible.

Two years ago the trustees of Nelson Township, Portage County, sent a committee to visit Gustavus and Green Township. This committee spent four days investigating the conditions found there. The committee was composed of representatives from both sides of the question, and in the course of this investigation a thorough canvass of the township was made for the purpose of getting public opinion on the subject, and a member of this committee told me that of fifty-six persons interviewed forty-five were in favor of the system, four were indifferent and seven against, and of the seven who were against the system six were without children in attendance at the school. These circumstances combined to make Green and Gustavus townships typical examples of successful co-operation. Courteous officials and an enthusiastic and magnetic class of thoroughly trained teachers working in an appreciative community could not but be successful. The advantages of an up-to-date and thoroughly conducted high school were in this rural community shared alike by all the children of the township.

The school building at Gustavus is a large two-story frame building, erected in 1898 at a cost of \$3,500, and here again is a school building standing at the exact center of a township which had formerly nine districts. Four teachers are employed in this school and nine wagons convey an average of 160 pupils for eight months in the year. Mr. Philo Gates, who for thirty years had been township treasurer, says that, upon the average, taxation has somewhat increased, yet the cost per capita is much less than it was formerly. When the organization was first voted upon it was carried with but seventeen majority, but now he knows of only two in the township who object to the centralization. Mr. Webb, a leading farmer, says that he has had children attending school under both systems and believes that six months under the central system is as good as nine months under the old district plan. The routes throughout this township were let to the lowest bidder, the successful bidder being required to give a bond for the fulfilling of his contract and also for the good conduct of himself and the care of the pupils he carries; further, he is required to provide comfortable and well-covered vans in which to carry the children, also furnishes blankets and robes and in cold weather soap-stones or oil stove heaters. The vans carry on an average, about twenty pupils each. The children step into these vans at the roadside right from their own gate and are set down upon the school house grounds. There is no tramping through the mud and snow. The longest distance traveled by any van in either Green or Gustavus township is about six miles and the shortest route about three miles. The average cost per van is \$1.10 per day. As a prominent farmer, Mr. Dick, said to me, "There are far better results to come when we remember that with the centralizing of our schools comes a regularly accredited school with all modern facilities for the advancement of our young people until our schools here in this rural community stand upon an equal footing with the high school of our towns." Mr. Lyons said, "The poor man who has heretofore only been able to send his children to the district school now has the pleasure of seeing them securing the best education that could be provided by the county." One of the strongest advocates of the system was a man who lived in sight of one of the original school houses which later was abandoned. He said, "I was utterly opposed to the system. I signed a petition against it

and circulated it with others. In fact, I went to Painesville and made application for an injunction to restrain the township trustees from moving the old school house, but now I would not go back to the old way for anything." This man has two children in school at the present time. Another man who formerly voted against the measure, said "You could not hire me to go back to the old system. I strongly opposed it but am now sending four children to school, and as I often remark to my wife, is it not nice that our children are not out in the storm today." This man said to me that the finest feature of the system is the transportation of the children.

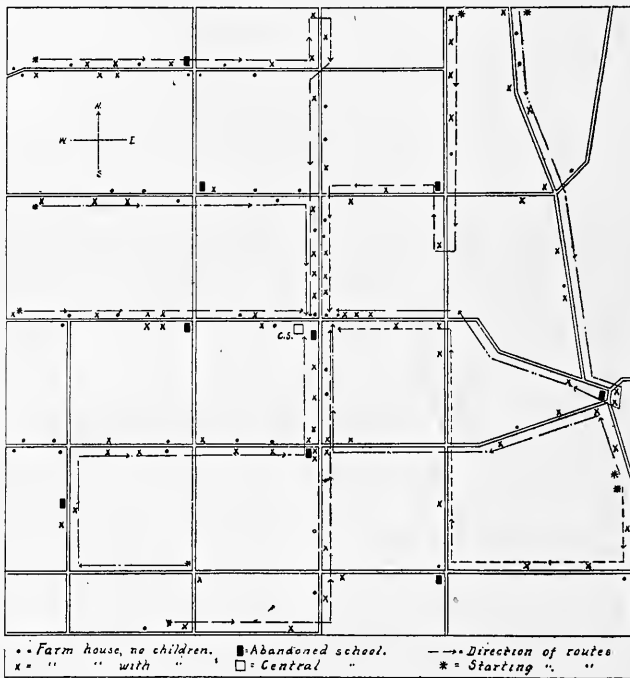


Diagram of Gustavus Township, Trumbull County, Ohio.  
 Showing Transportation Routes.

Hon. C. G. Williams, a prominent farmer of Gustavus township, a worker in Ohio farmers' institutes and a frequent contributor to the agricultural papers, says in the *Ohio Farmer*, in answer to queries: "We pay our drivers from \$1.00 to \$1.50 per day according to the length of route. Our average is \$1.28. In adjoining townships, all of which are centralized, I think the cost is a little more, perhaps \$1.40 per day. The routes are from two and one-half to five miles. This is very cheap, but the facts remain that there are always more bidders than routes. You see the small farmer can make the trip in about four hours, and a good part of the year he has nothing else to do, and nothing perhaps for the team to do. It is so much extra money." In answer to the question, is it advisable to have more than one central school, he says: "That is a

local consideration, but with townships, such as ours, with a small hamlet near the center, most assuredly not. It takes numbers to make a good school, to give inspiration. Few, if any, of our townships have as many pupils as can be cared for, even under centralization. It would be folly to run two corps of teachers. As to expense, a careful going over of the books of our township clerk shows that we are paying something like \$250 more per year under the new system than we did under the old. This is for the school year ending last August, as compared with the last year under the old system. This small sum, however, pays for two months more of high school than we formerly had. The per capita expense is no greater."



Going home from School, Gustavus Township, Trumbull County, Ohio.

These wagons are fitted with curtains, lap robes and if necessary with oil stoves for severe weather. The longest route is five miles.

The routes pay as follows:

ROUTE.	AMOUNT.	MILES TRAVELED.
No. 1.....	\$1.55 per day.....	5 miles
No. 2.....	.98 per day.....	3 ¼ miles
No. 3.....	.69 per day.....	2 ½ miles
No. 4.....	1.50 per day.....	5 miles
No. 5.....	1.25 per day.....	3 ¼ miles
No. 6.....	1.45 per day.....	4 ½ miles
No. 7.....	1.40 per day.....	4 ½ miles
No. 8.....	1.48 per day.....	5 miles
No. 9.....	.95 per day.....	3 ½ miles

Average paid each driver \$1.25 per day. Average distance traveled four miles.

At Aurora, Portage County, the patrons took up the matter of centralizing about six years ago and made arrangements to convey the pupils of the eleven districts to these central schools. One of the trustees told me that after four years' preliminary trial the people have become satisfied with the question of permanency and two years ago there was erected

one central school building which accommodates the 120 pupils in attendance. Over two-thirds of these are conveyed in wagons. The average daily attendance is 95 percent of the enrollment as compared with only about 65 percent under the old sub-district plan. The township treasurer told me that the aggregate cost of the eleven districts for the two years preceding the centralization was a little over \$4,000 per annum for an eight months' school, while the cost of the centralized school has not exceeded \$3,800 for 9½ months' school. In answer to my question as to whether the patrons were satisfied he replied "We do not know of any one who wants to return to the old plan. Every one is satisfied."

In Trumbull Township, Ashtabula County, one of the trustees told me that his township was centralized in 1899. Originally eight districts were reduced to one centrally located and employing three teachers. The ten grades now taught would be advanced next year to twelve. There was strong opposition at first and he himself was the principal opponent; but the school is successful, satisfaction is increasing, more interest is apparent on the part of both patrons and children, and other pupils who were attending other schools away from home are now attending the centralized school. Taxes were increased about ten per cent. The increase was largely due to the condition of roads. I found here the most heavy clay roads on my trip, and I am told that they are very bad a portion of the year but the wagons were able to make the trip on schedule time.

In another centralized township which I visited, there were originally three districts. The roads were quite bad, but the driver of one of the vans, Mr. Montgomery, reported but one day missed during the year and that because of a heavy snow storm. The teacher, Miss Griswold, reported that but few of her pupils had been absent or tardy during the year. The three sub-districts had, previous to their centralization, an enrollment of twenty-one pupils or an average of just seven per school and the per capita cost was \$45. There is in the one centralized school an enrollment of thirty-five with a per capita cost of \$15.50.

It should be borne in mind that in order to centralize a township it is not necessary to bring all the schools to the geographical center but they may be centralized in two or more places, and there may still remain in the township two or three schools which do not enter into the consolidated district. Some people get the idea that all children must be carried to the geographical center of the township regardless of conditions. This is not the case. During our visit to Ohio we saw townships which were entirely centralized and those which had but partial centralization. This matter is optional with the patrons of the township, as with the township as the unit all questions of rural school centralization are matters of local option.

In a general way the peculiar conditions found in Ohio vary but little from the problems which exist in the school system of Illinois. Naturally one of the first considerations will be the condition of the roads for the transportation of the pupils to the central schools. I will simply say that after driving over one hundred miles the writer concluded that the average condition of Ohio roads, judging by the ruts and general roughness, even as late as the first of May, was not much ahead of that of Illinois. In fact the good roads problem in that state is just as far from solution as it is

with us, therefore, if the desirability and efficiency of the transportation problem depends on the question of roads, Ohio certainly has no great advantage. After all the problem of transportation is not the first problem in centralization but the last. After spending ten days in Ohio, traveling from the Miami valley in the southwestern part of the state to the Western Reserve of the northeast and spending more time in looking up the objections to the centralized system than inquiring into its merits, I will say, that similar testimony to that which has been quoted could be continued indefinitely.

We thoroughly investigated a number of schools situated in different townships and counties and in some instances places where the old district school and the centralized rural school were found working side by side. In such instances as came under my observation the comparison was not at all favorable to the old system. While opposition to centralization has in very many instances been active and determined, it was the opposition growing out of lack of correct information; the people were simply mistaken or misinformed. So those who at first bitterly opposed centralization of schools in most cases frankly acknowledged their mistake and were found to be the friends of the plan. We found instances of this kind in every place which we visited, for while there was decided opposition to the plan at the start yet the successful operation of the system almost always wins unanimous approval.

The plan of centralization offers equal advantages to all the children of the township. It permits a better grading of the schools and classification of the pupils. It affords an opportunity for thorough work by adding more weeks of schooling and the addition of higher grades of study. Fewer but better and more capable teachers will be employed and retained, and besides it brings the stimulating influence of larger classes with the spirit of emulation incident thereto. Small schools can not have the vitalizing force that comes from larger numbers. Children who are transported in comfortable wagons are not exposed to the rigors of inclement weather. Tardiness and absence are almost unknown. The parents become more deeply interested in the schools. It results in better school buildings, better sanitary conditions, better equipment, and all of this at a less aggregate expense than under the small district plan.

While the centralization plan is not perfection, nor will it cure all the ills with which our educational system is affected, yet it is certainly an improvement over the old method and it has substantial advantages that will more than repay the expense and inconvenience incident to the reorganization. Better means of education, better training and stronger characters—these possibilities must appeal to every public spirited citizen of any community.

The farmers of Illinois are doing well in having a College of Agriculture built up in connection with the State University, where their sons may have a chance for all the higher educational advantages, but how small a percent of our farm boys are able to avail themselves of this opportunity. Let us not stop here but let the spirit which influences that work extend to every township in the way of an enriched course of study which may be taken up in the centralized township school, and as a result, more boys and girls from the farm will be prepared to go to the State University and obtain the best results from the work they there take

up; besides to that large number of boys and girls for whom the district school is their only alma mater there will come the opportunity of getting from their own homes the best of high school training. If centralization is good for Ohio we want the privilege of applying it wherever conditions and environment will permit. It has been proved to be good for Ohio boys and girls, now why should not those of Illinois enjoy the same privileges?

All of which is respectfully submitted. Yours truly,

FRED H. RANKIN.

### COST OF TRANSPORTATION.

One of the first questions connected with the free transportation of children to centrally located schools serving half a township or more is the expense of gathering them from their homes in the morning and delivering them again at night. On this point full and seemingly accurate data were collected, and all agree that transportation is cheaper than schools, and that the first effect of transportation is to lessen expense.

Iowa pays drivers from \$25 to \$30 per month, according to the route. This includes team, covered wagon, robes, etc. Frequently, if not generally, when the plan has been longest in operation the township owns the wagons, and a somewhat lower rate is paid for driver and team. There generally seems to be no difficulty in securing drivers, for no such difficulty is ever mentioned, indeed one of the objections commonly found is against letting the job to the lowest bidder.

Speaking generally one team can transport all the children of an average school district (15 to 20). This man, team and wagon, therefore, at an expense of one dollar to one and one-half dollars per day, take the place of a school house, with its heating and repairs, and oftentimes of a school teacher as well. It is not surprising then; that it is cheaper to transport the children of a small school than to maintain a school for them.

Superintendent Jones, of Indiana, after an exhaustive study of the matter of cost, says, "Any school with an enrollment of fewer than twenty pupils may be combined with a similar or larger school at no increased expense provided the distance be not too great and the roads permit of easy and rapid transit." And he adds, "In general it may be said that any school in which the daily per capita cost exceeds fifteen cents may be consolidated with other schools without increasing the expense."



Vermont transports 7,651 children for \$36,000 per term, or a little less than \$4.71 apiece.

Speaking very generally it costs about \$1.50 per month for each child conveyed to and from school daily.

### IS TRANSPORTATION FEASIBLE?

Next to the question of cost, the first objection generally offered is that it is not feasible because the "roads are often drifted in the winter and impassable from mud in the spring." But as it is aptly put by Superintendent Devine, of North Dakota, this only raises the question whether it shall be the horses or the children that shall wade through.

No one can study these questions, however, without becoming satisfied that the state of the roads has a significant bearing upon the case especially upon the cheapness of consolidation, just as it has always had upon the health and comfort of our children and will continue to have until either with or without consolidation little children and young girls will be no longer obliged to wade through snow and mud and sit all day with wet feet and clothing as thousands have been doing for years. This point, when raised, is not a new one peculiar to transportation; it only brings to light a condition that has always existed and is as bad for children as for horses, and when the point is urged that there are "many days not fit for a horse to be taken out," it is difficult to believe that the full bearing of the remark can be appreciated or it would not be uttered.

The fact is that many of the schools in operation, notably the one at Buffalo Center, Iowa, are surrounded only by mud roads. The same is true of many in Indiana and Ohio. This makes a seeming difficulty, but milk is transported to the factories regularly and mail is delivered; then why not children also?

There is no question but consolidation of schools like rural delivery of mail goes naturally with better roads, and that both will hasten their coming; but it is also true that both are entirely feasible under present conditions, and that hesitancy on this account is not only to deprive children of their school privileges but also to shirk upon them and their feet and legs a job we consider too hard for our horses.

## TRANSPORTATION ALREADY A FACT IN ALL PARTS OF ILLINOIS.

It is a singular fact and one that escaped notice until very recently that transportation has been long practiced in all parts of the country, and when men are showing, as they suppose, conclusively that transportation of children is impossible on account of "bad roads" and "stormy weather" they will find, if they look about, that it has been going on silently for years all about them.

A good proportion of the young men and women in the village and small city high schools everywhere come from the surrounding country and a large share of them drive or ride to and from school every day. In one instance a family of four young men all graduated from the city high school driving *seven miles* and back daily. This was over the "mud roads" of central Illinois. In this same small city the non-resident tuition has more than paid the superintendent's salary for the last thirty years. Superintendent Kern reports that the farmers of Winnebago county alone have paid over \$30,000 tuition in the city schools in the last ten years.

In one city in central Illinois as many as seven vehicles come into town over a single road every day bringing children to school. In this instance the livery men were obliged to make additions to their stables "on account of the horses bringing children in to school."

On the basis of facts like these it is folly to maintain that transportation is impossible. Transportation is a *fact*,—a well settled practice already, though it is done at private expense which is the most costly way imaginable. It is not too much to say that the horses now engaged in carrying young men and women to the village high school in all sorts of conveyances, are fully enough if doubled up and attached to suitable vehicles to carry all the children of the same territory to a central school. Transportation is a fact. Shall we enjoy its full fruits in a rational system of country schools?

## COST OF CONSOLIDATION.

The total cost of consolidation as compared with separate schools is variously reported as "much less," "the same," or "it costs more but the schools are better."

These all represent correspondingly different degrees and kinds of consolidation. The first refers to the closing of a small school of but few pupils and transporting them, often in a body, to a neighboring school able to receive them with no addition to the teaching force. In this case transportation and a nominal tuition are the only outlay, and there is saved one teacher and the cost of maintaining and heating a school house.

The second case refers to a moderate consolidation in which several schools are combined, and graded, and in which fewer but better teachers are employed—better schools at no additional expense.

The third case refers to comparatively complete consolidation with a central building often costing \$10,000.00 to \$12,000.00, with three to five teachers and doing one or two years of high school work.

Stated briefly it means that consolidation will secure as good schools with much less outlay, or better schools with the same outlay, as the patrons may desire. It also means that it makes possible a far better school than can be provided otherwise for the country child unless he move to town, and it is the only known way of providing higher education for the country children within reach of their homes.

#### OBJECTIONS.

Consolidation is generally bitterly opposed when first suggested. The principal objections are as follows:

1. It will cost too much.
2. The roads are not suitable.
3. The roads and weather are often unfit to take out a team.
4. It is better for the children to walk.
5. It compels a cold lunch at school.
6. It will reduce the value of farm lands in the neighborhood of abandoned school houses.
7. There is sentiment against removing "The old school house."
8. It will throw many teachers out of employment.
9. It takes children too far from home.

A close study of the facts shows that these objections are not sustained by experience.

## ADVANTAGES OF CONSOLIDATION.

1. It is much cheaper for the same grade of school.
2. At the same expense much better schools can be provided, because fewer teachers being needed a better grade can be secured, a division of labor established, and at least some sort of supervision inaugurated.
3. It makes possible a country school equal in every sense to the best city schools, yet within the reach of farm homes. No other system has been tried or even proposed that can accomplish this or guarantee to the country child the same educational advantages as are afforded the city child without taking him out of his home and to the city; or what is the same thing, preserve intact the virility of country life. All this can be accomplished without even a small village as a center, for some of the best school have no connection with any town, but like country homes stand in the groves as a part of nature.
4. The health of the children is better when conveyed in wagons and landed warm and dry than when sitting all day with wet feet and draggled clothing after tramping through all kinds of roads in all kinds of weather.
5. Children are protected from the danger of those offences to decency and good morals, so common on the road going to and from school, and that are so well understood by everybody who has ever taught a country school.
6. The number who will attend school is found to be larger when children are conveyed; the attendance is more regular and tardiness is unknown.
7. The health is noticeably better, especially as regards colds.
8. The inspiration that comes with numbers puts life into the school that is impossible in classes of one or two each. It also militates against that self-consciousness due to lack of association so often noticeable in country children as it does against the domineering influence of one or two "big scholars" in a small school.
9. The teachers feel and exhibit the effect of contact with other teachers, a condition in marked contrast with that of one working alone month after month with no companionship but that of children.

10. It makes possible the employment of at least one experienced, well-educated, broad-minded teacher, under whose supervision even young and inexperienced teachers covering fewer things will do far better than when working alone trying to teach everything.

11. This makes possible the conduct of a school with the proper regard to the industries and professions of life, *and it is the only way in which agriculture, nature study, and household science can ever be generally introduced into the country schools.*

12. It equalizes the cost of schooling, making it no more per capita for an outlying, thinly populated district than for any other.

13. It increases property values as a whole for those who care to sell, and it broadens life for those who stay.

14. It eliminates illiteracy on the one hand and on the other the false views of city life so commonly imbibed by school children, thus rationalizing the emigration from country to city.

15. It makes unnecessary the sending of young boys and girls away from home for high school privileges on the one hand, or the breaking up of homes on the other, in "going to town to educate the children."

16. It makes unnecessary the present costly system of sending the young men and women at private expense to village high schools, thus supporting a double system of education for country children.

#### DISADVANTAGES.

None.—The most searching inquiry has failed to discover anything worthy of mention in this connection, except the possibility of children being taken ill at school. Inasmuch as the rules generally provide that such a child shall be immediately taken home in a comfortable conveyance, this seeming disadvantage is after all a substantial advantage over walking even a shorter distance. Indeed the amount of travel under consolidation is far less than might be supposed as the routes are seldom over four miles long.

## DIFFICULTIES.

There is no gainsaying the fact that three real difficulties attend consolidation, viz.:

1. Bad roads, which though not unsurmountable are yet great obstacles to its best operation. In this is also involved all other traffic as well, particularly rural delivery of mails, and delivery of milk. Roads will improve and in the meantime mail and milk will be delivered. To say that children cannot be hauled is to throw upon them a burden we are not willing to put upon horses. And it is to ignore the facts, for they are carried successfully over all roads, never failing over two days in a single year.

2. Bad drivers.—For obvious reasons this is a point always to be guarded. Few complaints have been reported, however, and from the fact that no difficulty seems to be experienced in securing drivers in abundance most of whom are parents and many of whom are mothers it is apparently an element easily controlled, and while it is a matter capable of much abuse it appears in practice to give little difficulty. Often the driving is done by the larger pupils, and no real difficulty appears at this point in actual practice.

3. Prejudice in advance of trial.—This is generally strong, especially where the small district plan is already in operation, and a long list of objections is certain to be filed against the undertaking. These must be reckoned with in advance, though they disappear with trial, and *no case is on record in which the change has been made back again from consolidation to the small school*. As might be expected, consolidation is most easily and naturally affected in states where some sort of township organization exists, and least easily in those sections in which the local organization and community sentiment are strongest.

## IF CONDITIONS WERE REVERSED.

The greatest difficulty in consolidating these scattered and weakly schools lies in the fact that it is a "new thing." We grow accustomed or "hardened" to the disadvantages of a system long in use and come to look upon them as inherent in the case and altogether inevitable, but we have little patience with the difficulties of a new system, many of which are imaginary

and others of which will disappear with experience. And so it is that we bear the ills to which we have grown accustomed until they become intolerable, believing always that it is conservatism, and not unthinking apathy that controls us.

It throws light on a situation of this sort to reverse conditions. Suppose that consolidation had been the plan up to date, and that good graded schools doing high school work were established in the country everywhere to which children were transported regularly and landed warm and dry every day, requiring six to eight wagons for each school.

Suppose then the proposition should come up to dissolve these schools; to build eight houses in the township instead of one or two; to hire eight teachers instead of three or four; that each teacher should "try to teach everything;" that the children, even little girls, should walk through mud and slush and in zero weather even as far as two miles or go without education; that under the new system all high school work would of necessity be abandoned. What then would be thought of the present system if it came up as a new proposition for the consideration of sensible men?

The arguments for such a change could not be many. It might sound well to advocate the putting of these horses and drivers to useful work, letting the children walk, but to build eight houses instead of one and to hire eight teachers instead of three or four, all that a half dozen drivers and teams may earn something in other ways would not seem economy. The schools would certainly suffer as would the health of the little children. Let him who has a lively imagination tell us what the mothers would say whose children had always been transported warm and dry, when it should be seriously proposed that hereafter the little ones should wade while horses and mules spoiling for exercise stand in the barns and kick the boards off for sheer amusement or lack of exercise.

It seems silly to draw this comparison, and yet it is sometimes necessary to look through the other end of the telescope in order to see things in their true proportions. The stubborn fact is that the old-time district school was fitted to a condition of things that has long since passed away. It is an antiquated institution and its days of usefulness in most country districts

are practically over. It belongs with the scythe and the hand rake and is of the days when corn was planted by hand. *If the consolidated system were the custom would we think of changing to the present one?* In seeking an answer to this question let it be remembered that no locality that has tried it has ever changed back to the old way.

#### CONCLUSIONS.

Whatever difference of opinion may exist, those who have studied it must agree upon the following points:

1. That many country school districts are so small and weak that no school is conducted.

2. That many others consist of but three or four pupils and the expense for elementary schooling, frequently rises to more than \$100.00 per pupil, which is higher than the tuition for collegiate instruction.

3. That at least one-third of the country schools are too small to be even fairly successful.

4. That when the school is of fair size, consisting of many classes of few each, with but one teacher to do the work, the time is frittered away in a large number of short recitations, often but five minutes each.

5. That fully one-third of all the teachers have had less than one year's experience and never even saw a really good school.

6. That the best teachers are taken for the graded schools, and that of those *available for country* schools, from fifty to seventy-five percent are "young girls" who have had no more training than is given in the school they are to attempt to teach.

7. That when schools are established within walking distances of each other, the above mentioned conditions are certain to follow, and that the only way ever tried or even proposed by which these schools can be made effective is to combine them into small numbers with fewer and better teachers whose work can then be better divided and better supervised.

8. That as conditions exist today little children walk long distances and suffer much discomfort and ill-health by reason of exposure to storms and from sitting all day with wet feet and damp clothing after wading snow drifts, slush, and mud on the way to school. This is especially true of young girls.



9. That the only humane way of putting children of all ages and conditions into school through all kinds of weather is to transport them in wagons that are covered and, when necessary, warmed.

10. That consolidation and transportation tend greatly to lessen expense so that the same grade of schools can be had much cheaper, or a far better grade at the same expense, as patrons may desire, or, if they please, a full equivalent of the best city schools may be established and conducted at slightly greater cost than heretofore and at a much lower rate than in the city.

11. That as things are today without consolidation, country people not only pay more for elementary instruction alone than city schools cost, including the high school course, but, in addition, farmers pay out vast sums for tuition and other expenses of their older children attending city schools for what is not offered at home.

12. That though enormously expensive these schools are not effective, necessitating large additional outlay in sending the older children to the city schools at excessive cost and with much inconvenience because done entirely as private enterprise and at personal cost.

13. That this condition often results in the whole family "moving to town to educate the children" to the damage of the school left behind, to the disadvantage of the business, at the expense of breaking up the old home and at the risk of giving the family false ideas of both city and country life.

14. That the only proper way to educate a child up to and including the high school is to do it without disturbing his home or taking him out of it, and that the country child is entitled to as good an education as the city child and at no more risk or inconvenience to him or his family.

15. That it is not necessary to consolidate about a village school, but that wherever it is done the result should be a country and not a city school.

16. That consolidation is the only way of securing really good country schools, and it is the only means of introducing the study of agriculture generally into the public schools.

17. No one can avoid the conclusion that the objections of-

ferred in advance of trial are mostly either fanciful or selfish; that they are not realized in practice; that consolidation is the only plan tried or proposed by which the country child can secure such an education as modern conditions demand, and such as is already afforded the city child.

18. It lessens the expense and equalizes the cost; it protects the health and morals of the child and makes the introduction of agriculture and the other industries possible; it enhances the value of farm property as a whole; it brightens and broadens country life; it preserves its virility unimpaired and rationalizes the movement toward population centers. Such difficulties as are found are trivial or transient, or both, and are such as would not stand in the way of any commercial enterprise for a moment.

19. Consolidation of country schools is the solution of the problem of agricultural education and it is the only complete solution that has been offered.

## APPENDIX—ILLINOIS CONDITIONS.

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### THE COUNTRY CHILD MUST HAVE A COUNTRY SCHOOL.

Honorable Alfred Bayliss, superintendent of public instruction for Illinois, in his 1900 report, pages 50 to 53, says:

#### THE RURAL SCHOOLS.

"In Illinois, as elsewhere, the country school is just now the chief object of solicitude. Students of education in all parts of the country are lamenting its alleged decline and seeking to find and state the cause. The large communities are able to take care of themselves, and are quite generally doing it. In the country the terms are shorter. The teachers are not so well paid. Facilities are inadequate. The surroundings are depressing. Classification is difficult. Gradation is impossible. A teacher no sooner develops aptitude for her work than she is wanted in the nearest "graded" school. She goes, because she can get more dollars a month for more months in the year. She goes because the large school has light, warmth, trees, books, pictures—an environment. She goes where she will have from eight to twelve classes a day instead of thirty or forty. She goes to place herself under the stimulating influences of comparison, competition, example, criticism, correction, and co-operation. She leaves a miscellaneous collection of boys and girls to go to an organized *school*. It is her plain duty to go—she thinks.

"This is one view. There is another. Under the right conditions the country school has still some advantages, at least for the younger children, over its more highly organized city neighbor. The chief of these is the superior "timbre"—quality—of the pupils. They have better physical health, better nerves, and consequently more will power. They are more likely to have slept well and sufficiently the night before. More home responsibilities induces more independence, manifesting itself in both thought and action. The mixed school favors the community spirit. The country school is "nearer to nature's heart." The city school has in the past been the victim of over organization. Cranks have sometimes appeared, who reasoned that because so much work might be done in eight years by the mythical "average pupil," that all pupils should do that much, and none should do more; that exactly one-eighth of it should be done annually, one-ninth of one-eighth of it monthly, one-fourth of that weekly, and precisely one-fifth of one-fourth of one-ninth of one-eighth of the whole should be done each day, even if the victim of such procrustean madness had to take his books home and study half the evening. The country school has at least escaped that epidemic. Some of them, not many, are housed in well-lighted, well-warmed and ventilated little buildings. Some have a library, a museum of curiosities collected by the children themselves from all parts of the country by correspondence with other children, in exchange

for things found in their own neighborhood—sometimes even from other countries—some even have pictures, a workshop, a vegetable garden, a flower garden, trees and a live teacher. The country school that has all, or most of these things, and can maintain them, keeping the school open for eight or nine months a year, would better let well enough alone. They that are whole need not a physician. It is the weak districts that must be strengthened."

Reduced to its lowest terms this means that the country school is the best school for the country child. But a good school is not necessarily a city school. What is needed now is a new kind of a school,—a well organized, well equipped, well manned and well conducted country school, with children enough to make it interesting; taxable property enough to support it; teachers enough to provide for division of labor, and with courses of study that abound with the spirit and the strength of country life.

#### CONDITIONS IN ILLINOIS.

Conditions in Illinois are typical of the country school problem everywhere. They are not different in any essential particular. The feeling is universal among thinking men everywhere that something must be done. The time will not be long deferred, because the course of action is plain and the results of trial uniformly satisfactory. This, like every other economic element of our rapidly developing civilization must be put upon a business basis, and the movement has already well begun in this state.

#### TUITION PAID BY FARMERS.

From investigations made since the first edition was printed the amounts paid out by farmers for tuition of the older children in city and village schools is enormous. Superintendent Kern reports that more than \$30,000 has thus been paid out in Winnebago county alone in ten years as per the following schedule:

\*Amount of tuition paid by country people of Winnebago county to high schools for the ten years 1895-1904:

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\*Extract from Year Book 1904, by Supt. O. J. Kern of Winnebago County.

## THESE STATISTICS ARE TAKEN FROM TOWNSHIP TREASURER'S BOOKS.

YEAR	ROCKFORD	PECATONICA	DURAND	ROCKTON	WINNEBAGO	ROSCOE	CHERRY VALLEY	
1895.....	\$1,523.21	\$300.25	\$229.93	\$18.00	\$204.00	\$ 32.10	\$21.00	
1896.....	1,561.34	201.82	102.83	.....	121.25	163 t5	13.50	
1897.....	1,500.07	313.89	88.84	58 00	424.61	137.06	36.00	
1898.....	1,871.80	258.54	131.89	54.00	249.57	84.20	78.00	
1899.....	1,655.61	364.68	112.02	.....	279.93	135.20	27.00	
1900.....	2,009.27	346.00	232.01	54 40	245.62	116.30	.....	
1901.....	2,429.01	346.00	216.50	33.20	185.00	62.10	61.00	
1902.....	2,633.88	346.00	238.25	82.80	215.20	108.50	18.00	
1903.....	3,902.72	346.00	147.50	56 60	115.16	63.00	...	
1904.....	2,742.50	444.55	171.50	68.00	64.75	129.20	36.00	
Totals..	\$21,829.31	\$3,261.73	\$1,671.27	\$425.00	\$2,105.09	\$1,032.41	\$291.00	
Grand total for ten years.....								\$30,615.84

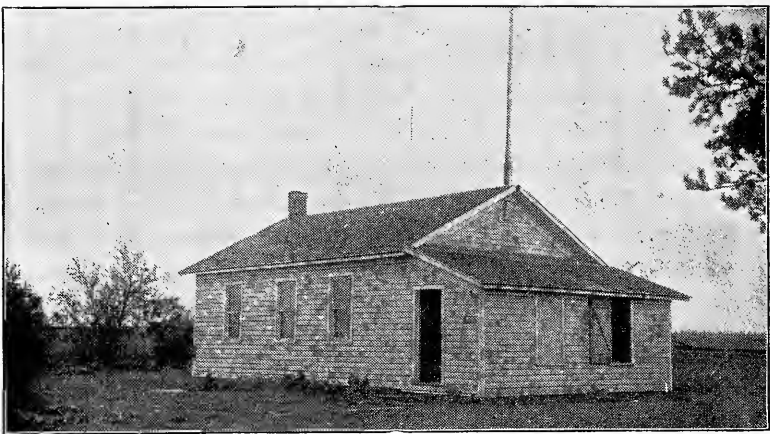
"The above is not what the county superintendent says or thinks but what treasurers' books show. This \$30,615.84 will BUILD FOUR SUCH BUILDINGS AS THE SEWARD CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL BUILDING WITH 3.6 ACRES FOR A SITE FOR EACH BUILDING AND ENOUGH LEFT OVER TO EQUIP THIRTEEN SCHOOL WAGONS AT A COST OF \$200 EACH. For the Seward building cost \$6,000 and the site \$1,000. This makes a total of \$7,000. Multiply \$7,000 by 4 and the result is \$28,000. Subtract this amount from \$30,615.84—the amount of tuition the country people have paid for last ten years—and the remainder is \$2,615.84. This will equip thirteen wagons at a most of \$200 each. \* \* \* Are the Seward people wise in their day and generation? See an account of this school in another chapter. Read the letters from people living in that district. What would be the effect if four such schools could be located in the seven townships of Winnebago county in which the country children have no high school privileges? And this for the amount of money expended by the country people for the last ten years as tuition to have a PART OF THE CHILDREN EDUCATED AWAY FROM HOME.

"What is the plain duty of the country people? THE COUNTRY CHILD IS ENTITLED TO JUST AS GOOD EDUCATIONAL ADVANTAGES AS THE MOST FAVORED CITY CHILD ATTENDING THE AMERICAN PUBLIC SCHOOL. TO HAVE BETTER SCHOOLS THE COUNTRY PEOPLE MUST NOT CHEAPEN THE INSTRUCTION FOR THE COUNTRY CHILD, BUT MORE MONEY MUST BE SPENT IN A MORE ECONOMICAL WAY."

A superintendent of one of the city schools of Illinois has collected from the farmers in this way during his term of service covering thirty years, more than enough to pay his salary. It would not be too much to say of village and small city school system generally that the farmers pay the superintendent and transport their own children besides. This is a tremendous expense and it concentrates upon a few *individuals*.

Farmers have been found who were schooling different members of the family in three different places at the same time, transporting all of them at their own expense and paying tuition—all in addition to paying taxes to keep up an inefficient school of the old sort in a "corner of a corn field."

If the country people of Michigan pay over a million dollars annually for high school privileges in addition to the cost



District 90. Abandoned 1903. Winnebago County, Ill.



District 91. Abandoned 1903. Winnebago County, Ill.



District 93. Abandoned 1903. Winnebago County, Ill.

The three schools abandoned for the first Consolidated School in Illinois.

of the country school system, what do the farmers of Illinois pay toward the support of city schools and what does it cost in horses, buggies and inconvenience to get the young people to the schools? The only alternative is consolidation or else to move to town at the sacrifice of business and the home, for a rented house is not a home.

In this connection the following from Superintendent Kern is to the point: (*Italics ours*).

*\*"The country child is entitled to just as good educational advantages as those enjoyed by the most favored city child attending the public school. It ought not to be necessary for the country people of Winnebago county to send their children away from home in order to get a good education. The last fifteen or twenty years have witnessed great advancement in the educational interests of the towns and cities. Large sums of money have been expended for material equipment in the way of better buildings, laboratories, libraries, manual training, etc. Superintendents and teachers in cities have become more efficient and are better paid. A strong effort has been made to adjust the course of study to practical conditions of life. Business courses have been introduced into high school and the general public seems to manifest a deeper interest in the entire educational machinery. The growth of towns and cities has been phenomenal and the resources of the people have been taxed to the utmost, at times, to provide every child with the best educational advantages.*

"Many farmers feeling that the district school did not furnish sufficient training for their children have moved to the cities to be under the influence of better schools. Some have complained that the city school has educated their children away from the farm. A moment's reflection is sufficient to show that the city school is for the city child with a course of study more suited for conditions in which the city child must earn a living. It is not expected that a high school in the city will teach country children about things relating to the farm. The city child, who after leaving school, works in a counting room, store, or factory does not need to know about the care and composition of soil; rotation of crops; breeding and selections of animals and plants; feeding standards for stock, etc. But the country boy who remains on the farm should know about these things if he expects to be numbered among the successful farmers of his day. And the country school should help him along these lines as well as to teach him reading, arithmetic, etc."

#### THE FIRST CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL IN ILLINOIS.

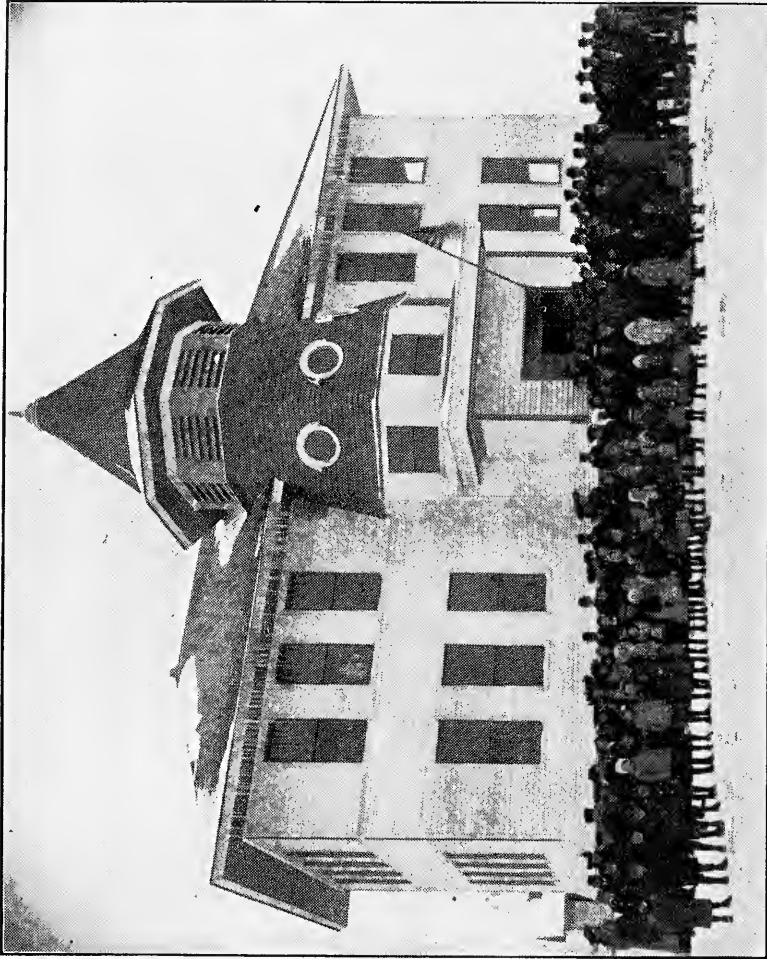
The first consolidated school in Illinois was organized in Winnebago county, and the school opened at the central building February 1, 1904.

The first movement towards consolidation was in February, 1899, when the citizens of Seward and vicinity invited O. J.

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\*Year Book, 1904.

Kern, Superintendent of Schools of Winnebago county, to deliver an address upon the subject "Township High Schools." This was with a view of organizing such a school at the village



THE FIRST CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL IN ILLINOIS.

of Seward, which is a small station on the Illinois Central railroad, fifteen miles from Rockford. This address was delivered February 22, 1899, the Superintendent taking the position that what was needed at Seward was not a township high school, but the consolidation of a number of the outlying small district schools. The idea was not well received at the time, only one



or two expressing assent to the position taken by the Superintendent.

Sentiment grew, however, and in March, 1903, petitions looking toward consolidation were circulated in three districts, 90, 91, and 93. In district 90, thirty-seven favored and twelve opposed the project; in district 91 fifteen favored and eleven opposed, and in district 93 twenty-one favored and five opposed.

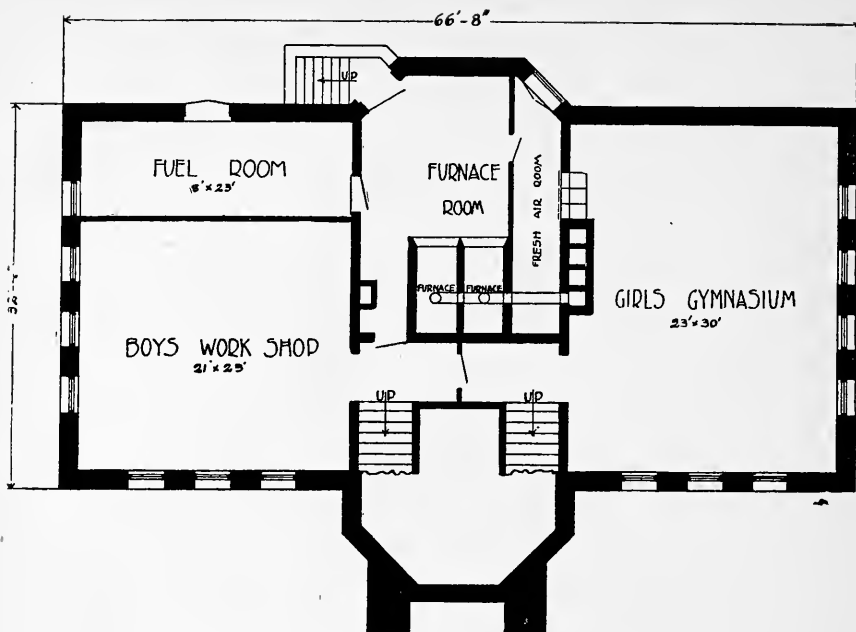
Thus was organized the first consolidated district, covering exactly one-third of the township, which is six miles square. It contains, therefore, twelve sections or 7,680 acres of land, with an assessed valuation of \$146,315. As real estate is assessed at one-fifth cash value this indicates that the total property of this district, real and personal, is not far from a million dollars.

A few days after organizing, by a vote of thirty-eight for and fifteen against, the people voted to bond the district for \$7,000 for ten years' time at 4 percent, and to erect a modern school house large enough for present and prospective needs. A little later by a vote of forty-seven to one a site of 3.6 acres of land was purchased at a thousand dollars. Plans were drawn and contracts let for a \$6,000 building.

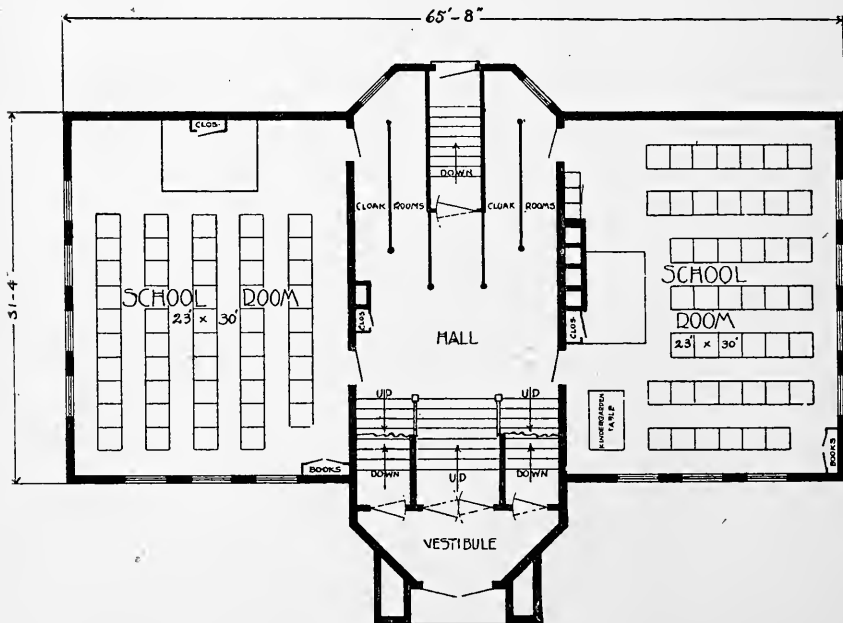
Accompanying cuts show the front elevation and the floor plans of this building, as well as exterior views of the three school houses abandoned.

This new building contains four rooms, each capable of accommodating fifty pupils; and in the basement are two large, well-lighted rooms intended for workshop and for household science, respectively. Over the furnace room in the first story are coat rooms, and in the second story, the laboratory and library. The walls of the building are tastefully tinted, the blackboards are of slate, and the floors throughout of hard maple. It is in every way an up-to-date and beautiful building, heated by two furnaces and seemingly perfectly ventilated. It stands near one corner of the site of 3.6 acres, plans for the beautifying of which have been made by students of the University of Illinois under the direction of Professor J. C. Blair.

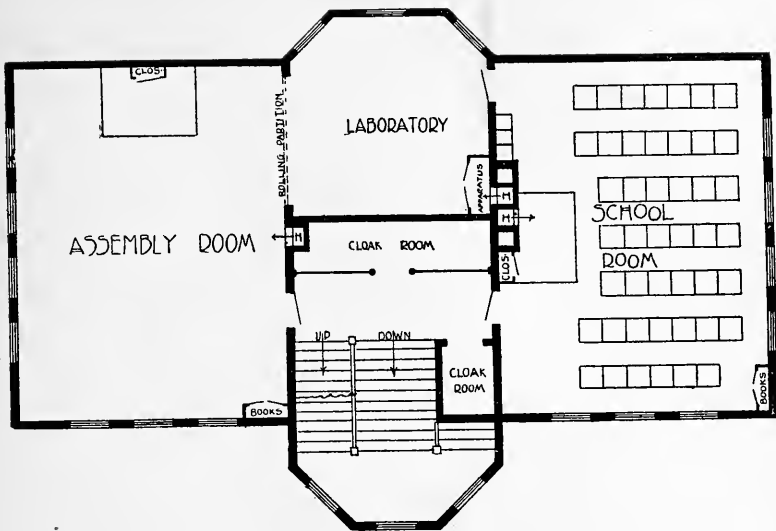
This building was dedicated January 30, with appropriate exercises. School opened the Monday following, February 1, with an attendance of 103 pupils, 15 of whom were non-residents who will pay tuition, leaving eighty-eight as representing



BASEMENT PLAN



FIRST FLOOR PLAN



SECOND FLOOR PLAN

the attendance from the three consolidated districts. It is a significant fact that the total registration in the three abandoned districts during the *entire* previous year was only seventy-nine, yet here on the first day upon the opening of the consolidated school eighty-eight young people presented themselves, a gain of nine the first day as compared with the total registration under the old plan. This school will do all the work heretofore attempted by the abandoned schools and two years' high school work in addition.

Three small, weak schools quartered in old battered houses were here merged into a single school, well housed in an up-to-date modern building. Under the system of instruction it will guarantee the pupils the work not only of the grades, but that of a two years' high school, as well, all at a cost of less than \$1.00 per acre of the land covered by the district. The advantages to this community are evident; indeed they are so apparent in Winnebago county that already three other communities are moving in the same direction.

More than to any one else credit is due to Superintendent Kern, not only for the achievement at Seward, but for the sentiment of the county, which will proceed to organize still other similar schools.

## LETTERS FROM PATRONS.\*

SEWARD, ILL., Oct. 19, 1904.

*Mr. O. J. Kern:*

DEAR SIR:—In reply to your inquiry, as to how the people of the Consolidated School district of Seward like the new plan of consolidation, I am pleased to say that it has proven better than its most sanguine supporters anticipated.

It has increased the average daily attendance, stimulated friendly competition in both parents and children, given a better acquaintance among the children of the district, and raised the standard of health by the better hygienic surroundings.

So far as I have been able to learn, I have not heard a word of complaint. Opposition has ceased and all parents and tax payers feel as though they were doing something to better the educational advantages of the country child.

Seward people are glad to welcome visitors who desire to inspect the new school.

Yours truly,

C. E. MARTIN, M. D.

SEWARD, ILL., Oct. 27, 1904.

*Mr. O. J. Kern:*

SIR:—We wish to express our entire satisfaction with the Consolidated School in our town. In our opinion it is a very decided improvement over the old district school. With regard to the hygienic feature the school house is so constructed as to give the very best results as to heating, lighting and ventilating.

Another feature which we think deserves special mention, is the competition which is aroused among the children who, being in the same grade, have a definite end for which to work, an aim in view, and every one strives to pass credibly to the next grade at the end of the year. In our Consolidated school every teacher has his own special grades to teach, and as the future of the child depends in a great measure on the beginning, it is a fact to be appreciated that the first years of our Consolidated school has such grand work for our little ones, as the earlier surroundings make a lasting impression on the minds of children. It can readily be seen the vast superiority over the old stuffy school room, of our commodious rooms, neatly kept with pictures and statues decorating the walls and everything that tends to elevate and instruct the youthful mind.

Respectfully yours,

MR. AND MRS. EDWARD McDONALD.

SEWARD, ILL., Oct. 19, 1904.

*Mr. O. J. Kern:*

DEAR SIR:—The Consolidated school of Seward, which you did so much to establish, is doing good work. The children take more interest in their school work than they did in the old district school system and the parents say they learn faster.

We hear no complaint from those that live at a distance.

Yours truly,

W. J. CLEVELAND.

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\*After one year's trial. Quoted from Kern's Year Book, 1904.

SEWARD, ILL., Oct. 19, 1904.

*Mr. O. J. Kern, County Superintendent:*

DEAR SIR:—We are greatly pleased with our Consolidated school. A number of the scholars are from outside districts.

"Competition," it is said, "is the life of trade." We have it in the number of scholars and the rivalry and enthusiasm it creates. Parents and scholars take an interest in the work as it is an advance step in education. I believe the Consolidated school has come to stay.

Yours truly,

JOHN W. FRY.

SEWARD, ILL., Oct. 19, 1904.

*Mr. O. J. Kern:*

DEAR SIR:—A few years ago when the subject "Consolidated School" was first broached, we fought rather shy of the subject. Little by little as the question was brought more plainly to our minds we began to get interested, and as objection after objection was argued away, we finally decided to build a school.

As the good people of Seward never do anything by halves it was decided to build a modern, up-to-date school house. This decision was carried into effect, and we have today a beautiful building, one that we can point to with pride.

We have a splendid corps of teachers, all zealous, untiring workers. The improvement in the children is something wonderful. We have just opened the fourth room as the other rooms were becoming crowded and more room was required.

We all feel as though we owe Mr. Kern, our efficient superintendent, a debt of gratitude for his untiring zeal in thus getting us interested in this worthy cause. Verily, our new Consolidated school is a "thing of beauty and a joy forever."

Yours truly,

M. MARKHAM.

SEWARD, ILL., Oct. 28, 1904.

*Mr. O. J. Kern:*

DEAR SIR:—The Consolidated school of our town that you worked so hard to build, is doing much better work than we ever expected it to do. It is giving general satisfaction and a number that were opposed to it at first are well pleased with it now and some say that they would not get along without it, regardless of cost.

I do not think it costs as much per scholar to run our new school as it cost per scholar to run our old schools. We had about 70 scholars in our old schools. We have over 100 in our new school.

I can say that I am very pleased with our school. I wish to thank you for the interest you have taken in it.

Yours,

GEO. H. SMITH.

#### FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF SEWARD SCHOOL.

The Consolidated school has been in operation only 5 months of last school year, closing July 1, 1904. FROM FIGURES TAKEN FROM TOWNSHIP TREASURER'S BOOKS, the following statements show cost under old and new plans:

### OLD PLAN WITH SCHOOL YEAR OF 8 MONTHS—NO HIGH SCHOOL.

DIST.	NO. PUPILS ENROLLED FOR YEAR	AV. DAILY ATTENDANCE FOR YEAR	MONTHS SCHOOLS	TOTAL EXPEN- DITURES FOR 8 MONTHS	TOTAL ON BASIS 9 MONTHS
90	28	21	8	\$372.80	\$419.40
91	41	23	8	374.10	420.86
93	20	14	8	334.74	376.58
Totals,	89	58		\$1,081.64	\$1,216.84

Notice by above report taken from Township Treasurer's Books that average daily attendance for year is only 58 which is 65 per cent of the total enrollment of 89 in three district schools.

### NEW PLAN WITH SCHOOL YEAR OF 9 MONTHS—WITH HIGH SCHOOL.

Expenditures and enrollment for 5 months, from February 1, 1904, to July 1, 1904. On November 7, 1904, a fourth teacher was added to give more time for all grades, especially High School Subjects. Teachers are paid a better yearly wage. Principal gets \$75 per month while grade teachers get \$40 per month. Under old district plan average yearly wage was \$35 per month.

DIST.	ENROLLMENT 5 MONTHS	AV. DAILY ATTENDANCE 5 MONTHS	TOTAL EXPEN- DITURES 5 MONTHS	TOTAL EXPEN- DITURES ON BASIS OF 9 MONTHS
Consolidated No. 121	116	88	\$842.50	\$1,516.50

Note that average daily attendance was 88 of an enrollment of 116 or 76 per cent. This is low because of measles in school during months of February and March soon after school opened.

The enrollment and daily attendance for October, 1904, was 104 and 91 respectively. Thus the percent of attendance for that month was 87½.

### TABLE OF COMPARATIVE ESTIMATES ON BASIS OF NINE MONTHS.

	DISTRICT	AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE FOR YEAR		COST PER PUPIL ON ENROLLMENT	COST PER PUPIL ON DAILY AV. ATTENDANCE
		ENROLLMENT FOR YEAR	FOR YEAR		
Separate Schools.	90	28	21	\$14.97	\$19.97
	91	41	23	10.65	18.29
	93	20	14	13.83	26.89
Consolidated 121	(5 mos.) 116	(5 mos.) 88		13.07	17.23

REMEMBER THAT THE CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL HAS A HIGH SCHOOL COURSE. THE TEACHERS ARE PAID BETTER WAGES. YET NOTICE THE COST PER PUPIL IN LAST TWO COLUMNS OF ABOVE TABLE. THE AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE IS A COMMON UNIT TO FIGURE EXPENSE, THAT IS, A DAY'S WORK. SEE LAST COLUMN OF ABOVE TABLE.

### BUILDING TAX ON NEW HOUSE.

But some opponents of Consolidation, doubtless want to know about the Enormous (?) tax to pay for the new building. Now the cost of new building with grounds of 3.6 acres should not count entirely against the new system. Besides, the first cost of a central building is much less than first cost of separate buildings. A good district school building, equipped

as it should be, will cost \$1,200. On a basis of eight such schools to a township the total first cost is \$9,600. The Seward building cost \$6,000 and will hold all the children of Seward township.

The cost of Seward building and grounds was \$7,000 in bonds drawing four percent annual levies. That makes the annual payment of principal amount to \$700 plus \$280 interest first year, and interest decreasing each year, making a total of \$980 for building tax. Suppose building tax was levied on land alone, leaving out personal property and railroad, the annual tax levy would be as follows:

#### COST PER ACRE ANNUALLY FOR BUILDING TAX.

DISTRICT.	NO. OF SECTIONS.	NO. ACRES.	ANNUAL PAYMENT.	TAX PER ACRE.
121	12	7,680	\$980	12½ cents

IT IS NO EXAGGERATION TO CLAIM THE NEW SCHOOL HAS ADDED TWELVE AND ONE-HALF CENTS TO VALUE OF EACH ACRE IN THE DISTRICT. PERHAPS MORE THAN THAT. GO OUT THERE AND ASK FARMERS WITH CHILDREN TO SEND TO SCHOOL ABOUT SELLING THEIR FARMS AND MOVING AWAY.

#### WHAT IS TO BE DONE ABOUT IT?

Like all other intolerable situations this condition of things will go until the farmers themselves, who are the ones most interested, insist that a rational system of schooling shall be established for country children—a system that really educates in and by means of the life the children know, and that the system shall operate without breaking up the family or endangering either the lives or the morals of children at tender ages.

When the farmers insist upon this they can have it. Nobody has the right to deny it to them and they can have it any time they really want it. The lack of it is the greatest bar to the progress of agricultural education now, and it is the most powerful deterrent influence in agricultural advancement.

What is wanted now is not more agricultural colleges, nor more or easier short courses, but rather a good system of country secondary schools suited to the conditions and needs of country people, and in which both agriculture and household science shall be freely taught.

Consolidation is not the end, but it is the natural and necessary prerequisite. It takes numbers and property to make a school. In the country population is not dense, therefore we must cover much territory. But horses, mules, and wagons will annihilate distance. They can do it for all the children as

they are doing it now for those whose parents are really alive to the conditions.

It is coming. It is only a question of time and not a very long time either. Consolidation is the means to the end, and the end is an adequate system of schools for the children of the farm.



There is a minimum below which a school cannot be a good school. That minimum for a mixed population of all ages is two teachers, two rooms, and thirty to forty children.

The country is thinly populated and good schools can never be established within walking distances of each other. Any system that really serves country people necessarily involves transportation.

Farmers are now supporting a double system of schools,—one in the corner of the corn field, which is elementary, but which cost fifty percent more per pupil than the entire city system including the high school. The other is in the city at private expense, and the farmers' tuition for high school instruction more than pays the superintendent of the entire city system.

Besides this the horses engaged in carrying young men and women from the farm to the city high school in all kinds of conveyances are more than enough, if properly "doubled up" and hitched to suitable vehicles, to carry all the children to central schools.

The farmers can never establish an effective system of country schools until they transport children as well as meet other necessary expenses of their schools at public expense.



**"The Country child is entitled to as good an education as the city child."—Kern.**



Going home from school Winnebago County, Ill., February 4, 1902.  
Mercury 12 degrees below zero and a stiff gale blowing.

**Consolidation of country schools is the solution of the problem of agricultural education, and it is the only complete solution that has been offered.**